



GLOBAL RISKS REVIEW

2024 | 2025



A Message from Raynold Lyngdoh, Director of Security Services at On Call International:

Dear Readers,

As we reflect on the events of 2024, it's clear that we are navigating an era marked by poly-crisis, of which is forecast to be the norm looking ahead. From the ongoing conflicts in the Levant and Ukraine to tense socio-economic issues and associated protests globally, the challenges we face are multifaceted and ever deeply interconnected. The increased crises of adverse weather and natural disaster events, and the resurgence of infectious diseases underscore the critical importance of effective risk management and the need for robust duty of care considerations for our constituents.

In this year's publication, we delve into these pressing issues, aiming to provide insights and strategies amidst these uncertainties. We explore the advantages of leveraging travel technology while understanding cybercrime impacting today's travelers, and also focus on uncommon laws overseas. We also look at the diverse risk management needs for educational institutions, NGOs, and faith-based groups operating in volatile regions to outline tailored risk management approaches that seek both safety and operational effectiveness. Additionally, advocating for crisis response exercises remains vital. These simulations can prepare organizations for real-world challenges, enhancing resiliency and response capabilities.

Our regional focus examines the shifting geopolitical landscape in Southeast Asia and the European Union's ongoing identity crisis. We also look at the trends of regressive LGBTQ+ rights in Africa, and the looming natural resource conflicts in the Americas. These topics not only highlight the complexities of global risk management, but also call for a unified response to advocate for human rights and sustainable practices. Our Medical and Operations Teams also contribute their insights, looking at their respective areas of oversight from a travel risk management lens.

As we move further into 2025, it is imperative that we adapt our approaches to these evolving challenges. The year ahead will demand innovation, collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to ensure we're safeguarding the welfare of our travelers.

We look forward to exploring these critical themes with you and providing the tools and insights needed to navigate the complexities of travel risk management and duty of care.



Warmest Regards,
Ray Lyngdoh
Ray Lyngdoh
Director of Security Services

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PREFACE: TRAVEL RISK MANAGEMENT IN TODAY'S MODERN WORLD

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5 TRENDS SHAPING TODAY'S TRAVEL RISK MANAGEMENT LANDSCAPE

As global dynamics, organizational policies, and traveler behaviors evolve, the field of travel risk management is continuously adapting to meet new challenges. With travel demand steadily increasing across all sectors, staying ahead of the risk management curve is even more critical. In this article, we explore some of the key trends that are shaping travel risk management today to help you better prepare for the year ahead.

1 Increased Travel: Continuing the Post-Pandemic Resurgence

As pandemic-related concerns continue to subside, travel has once again become a top priority for both individuals and organizations. The global travel landscape is seeing a significant resurgence, with more travelers returning to the skies, roads, and railways than in recent years. This upward trend in travel is expected to continue, with year-over-year growth driven by both increased demand and the normalization of travel patterns across the globe.

2 Hybrid and Remote Work Transforming Travel Dynamics

The continued shift toward hybrid and remote work is significantly reshaping travel patterns. As many organizations adopt these flexible work models, the need for in-person meetings, conferences, and events have become essential for maintaining a productive and engaged workforce. With increased demand for face-to-face interactions, teams are traveling more frequently to meet client needs and attend key events. At the same time, individuals are expressing a growing desire to travel for both professional and personal reasons. This heightened demand for in-person engagements underscores the critical importance of effective travel risk management, ensuring the safety and well-being of travelers as the need for meaningful human connection grows.

3 Embracing Technology in Travel Risk Management

The digital transformation in travel continues to accelerate, particularly among younger generations. A growing number of travelers now rely on mobile apps to book and manage their journeys, reflecting a broader trend toward greater convenience and efficiency. The preference for contactless check-in, which gained popularity during the pandemic, remains strong due to its ease and safety. Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) is playing a pivotal role in revolutionizing trip planning, enabling travelers to create personalized itineraries and access tailored recommendations through AI-powered tools and chatbots. As technology becomes an increasingly integral part of the travel experience, organizations must evolve their risk management strategies to address digital security and ensure travelers can safely utilize these innovations.

4 Increased Safety Concerns Amid Global Unrest

In an increasingly volatile global landscape, political tensions and unrest pose ongoing risks to international travelers. As geopolitical instability intensifies in certain regions, ensuring the personal safety and security of travelers has become a top priority for organizations. In this context, it is essential to implement a comprehensive travel risk management plan that includes proactive measures to mitigate these risks. This plan should encompass pre-trip training that educates travelers on regional political climates, potential threats, and local safety protocols. By preparing travelers with up-to-date information on health, security, and emergency response procedures, organizations can better equip their teams to navigate these challenges and ensure safe, successful international assignments. Additionally, having a well-defined contingency plan in place can provide travelers with the support they need should the situation on the ground change unexpectedly.

5 Duty of Care: Rising Responsibilities

As travel volumes continue to rise, organizations are increasingly confronted with expanding duty of care responsibilities. A comprehensive and tailored travel risk management strategy is no longer optional, is a critical component of fulfilling duty of care obligations. Before deploying travelers on international assignments, particularly to higher-risk regions, organizations must prioritize the development of robust safety protocols and ensure situational preparedness. This proactive approach not only protects the well-being of travelers, but also strengthens a culture of responsibility and accountability, reinforcing the commitment to duty of care and safeguarding travelers from potential risks.

Key trends currently shaping the travel risk management landscape include increased travel volumes, evolving work patterns, technological advancements, heightened safety concerns, and an expanded responsibility to organizational duty of care. By prioritizing proactive measures and adopting a comprehensive approach to risk management, organizations can ensure their travelers are well-prepared and protected. Moving forward, cultivating a culture of safety and awareness will be essential for navigating the complexities of modern travel, enabling both organizations and individuals to proceed with more confidence and peace of mind.



TRAVEL TO HRLM ENVIRONMENTS:

An Emerging Risk Management Trend

Destinations classified as high-risk environments have become a critical focus in today’s travel risk management landscape due to the increasing number of travelers venturing into these regions. These locations require comprehensive research, planning, and preparation before an organization commits to sending travelers. Even within developed countries, some areas can be identified as “last mile” destinations through a travel health and safety risk management lens. Travel to and operations in these environments necessitate more rigorous efforts to meet duty of care obligations. Proactively gathering, analyzing, and acting on relevant information empowers organizations and their travelers to achieve mission objectives safely and efficiently.

In this article, we will explore key considerations to help organizations effectively manage operations in high-risk or last mile destinations.

COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

As part of an infrastructure assessment process in HRLM locations, organizations should investigate and address all available means of communication options. This ranges from active daily use considerations to emergency incident circumstances. Asking pertinent questions and seeking the necessary resources to communicate with travelers in HRLM locations, especially during an emergency, is critical during this phase. Varying methods of communication and fallback options are necessary to operate in these environments safely and successfully.

DUE TO A LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, MOST HRLM LOCATIONS OFTEN DO NOT HAVE RELIABLE INTERNET AND TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMPTING UNRELIABLE MOBILE (CELLPHONE) SERVICE OR POOR WI-FI CONNECTIVITY.

Utilizing satellite phones could be considered an option. However, it is worth noting that many countries have stringent laws surrounding the transport and utilization of satellite phones, particularly by outside organizations/ personnel. It’s highly recommended to seek necessary operating permits from the relevant authorities and departments to utilize these types of resources.

Not only will travelers need to be able to communicate with one another while on a mission or assignment, but communication lines between individuals in-country and the organization’s headquarters should also be considered. For example, as observed in many HRLM areas, the authorities can turn off cellphone communication lines during an emergency, particularly if related to protest activities. Often overlooked, is that while cell phone data capability is turned off, the authorities will continue to allow at-home/office Wi-Fi connections, and personnel should be equipped accordingly. In these types of circumstances, creating communication windows and having multiple communication options can help facilitate lines of communication.

Communication is key and necessary, and organizations running HRLM operations should consider this critical aspect of operational risk management. Moreover, communication should not only consider the physical device aspects, but also the types of communication that need to be handled during an emergency. Should an emergency occur in an HRLM area, an organization could pre-emptively develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) whereby someone is already tasked and designated as being the person to communicate and liaise with impacted constituents’ family members.

It is also recommended that organizations put their communication systems and SOPs to the test periodically.

FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Regardless of the duration of the stay, reliable access to funds for daily and operational expenses should be a priority for any organization operating in HRLM areas. Varying factors can pose potential difficulties for constituents trying to access cash or conduct financial transactions. ATMs (if they exist) may be monitored by opportunistic thieves; such incidents occur more frequently than acknowledged. Furthermore, in many HRLM areas, credit and debit cards

are often not accepted, and the ability to pay by digital payments such as PayPal or Venmo are also unavailable. This poses a challenge as constituents stationed in such areas will need access to local currency and banking facilities. One potential solution is to provide travelers with contact information for pre-vetted, reputable banks in-country, with trusted contacts at said institutions to help set up accounts and conduct transactions safely. On a larger scale, if an organization needs to deposit or withdraw large sums of money regularly, they should ensure they have pre-identified secure methods to carry out these transactions, such as leveraging the services of an assets/cash/valuables in-transit company.

Cash-on-hand should be considered as an option for emergencies. These can either be given to respective employees for safekeeping or be accessible by identified personnel in a common area. Such an option requires stringent protocols and a due diligence process to ensure that no untoward incidents occur. Nevertheless, finances and the ability to access and utilize funds in a timely and efficient manner, for all potential circumstances, should provoke increased deliberation within organizations as related to operational risk management in HRLM areas.

CORRUPTION AND BRIBERY

Operating in HRLM destinations can mean constituents may encounter circumstances where, manifestly, or latently, bribes or corrupt practices are expected. Some potential questions worth asking therein could include:

- Is there a history of bribery and corruption in the location?
- If so, what is the organization’s comfort level with this type of practice?
- Does the organization already have anti-corruption policies and procedures in place regarding how constituents should react when faced with such situations?
- Have these policies been audited recently, or do they need revision considering any recent changes on the ground?
- Is it plausible to expect constituents to operate in such locations without paying forward a ‘gift’, and are they committed to abiding by the organization’s policies?

Deviating from established norms can expose organizations to both economic and reputational risks. Therefore, it is advisable for organizations to consider educating employees on the relevant issues to mitigate potential impacts.

UNDERDEVELOPED INFRASTRUCTURE

HRLM environments often feature underdeveloped infrastructure, which can significantly exacerbate



emergencies, especially when preemptive mitigation measures are lacking. Unpaved roads, for example, can make even short trips more time-consuming and dangerous, while public transit may be unsafe or unavailable.

Any travel in HRLM areas, regardless of duration, requires careful route planning to avoid known hotspots and associated risks. The shortest route may not always be the safest. Factors such as the day of the week, time of day, up-to-date local information, and establishing communication windows should be considered in advance to ensure safety and preparedness before departing from accommodations or meeting locations.

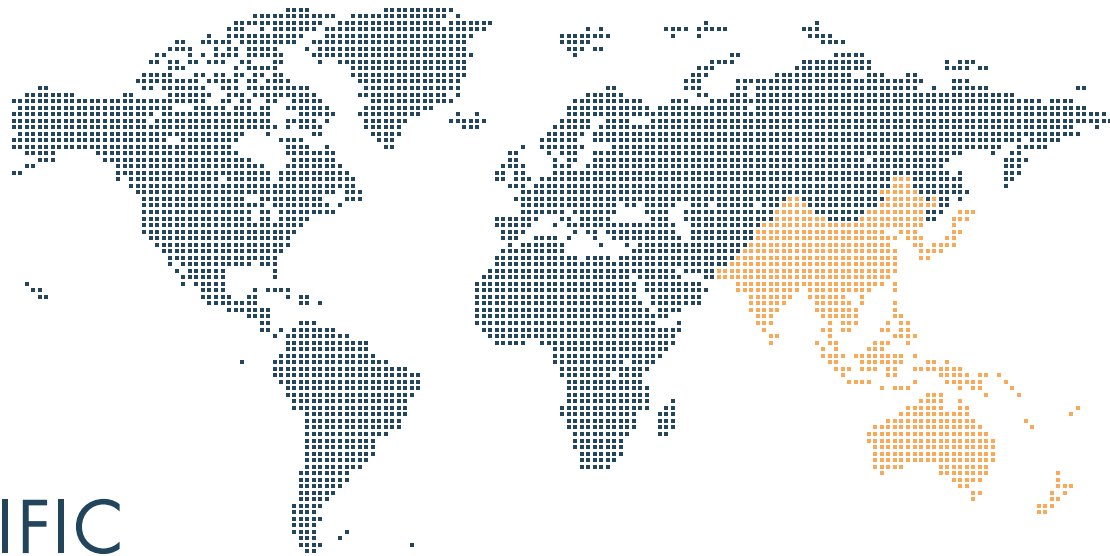
Organizations should assess how the availability, or lack thereof, of critical infrastructure—such as roads, public transit, hospitals, communication services, and essential supplies (food, water, fuel, electricity)—could exacerbate the impact of both manmade and natural emergencies. In such cases, organizations must evaluate their risk appetite and capabilities to effectively respond to these challenges post-event.

Even if an organization has never encountered an emergency in an HRLM destination, it is essential to avoid complacency by regularly auditing and updating crisis response plans to ensure they remain relevant to current operating conditions. As industries expand into new HR or LM locations, opportunities arise, but so do risks. Organizations must carefully consider the implications of traveling and operating in these areas, while maintaining their duty of care responsibilities. This proactive approach can help minimize risk exposure for both the organization and its stakeholders.



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ASIA-PACIFIC

Balancing Identities: Southeast Asia’s Role and Influence in a Globalized World

Southeast Asia is a region rich in cultural diversity, economic vitality, and strategic significance. Comprising of countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, it serves as a vital link between the Global North and South. As of 2024, the region is navigating a complex geopolitical landscape influenced by the rivalry between China and the United States (U.S.), alongside India’s rising influence in the wider region. Here, we examine the current social and political dynamics of Southeast Asia, the involvement of various global powers and the implications of their engagement, and provide a forecast for the region’s trajectory in the months ahead.

Throughout 2024, Southeast Asia has been characterized by a mix of economic growth, political challenges, and evolving alliances. The region has demonstrated remarkable resilience in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, with several nations in the region, including the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand, experiencing healthy economic growth rates. The economic resurgence has been bolstered by a burgeoning middle class, rapid urbanization, and a commitment to ongoing infrastructure investments. However, the growth rates are slower than pre-Covid forecast rates, and this progress occurs against a backdrop of complex geopolitical tensions.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plays a crucial role in fostering and promoting regional cooperation and stability. ASEAN’s efforts to maintain a unified stance have been challenged by the divergent

interests of its member states, particularly in the context of disputes in the South China Sea. China’s expansive claims and militarization of the region have intensified tensions, prompting ASEAN nations to respond with caution and strategic deliberation.

The strategic rivalry between China and the U.S. continues to significantly influence the region’s geopolitical landscape. China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has facilitated significant investments in infrastructure and trade partnerships across the region. Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have benefited from Chinese investments in infrastructure projects, including ports, railways, and energy projects, as well as an increased trade of commodities. However, these economic ties often create dependencies that can offer political leverage for Beijing.

Conversely, the U.S. maintains a robust presence in the region through its own economic, security, and defense alliances. The U.S. has reinforced its partnerships with countries like the Philippines and Thailand, conducting several joint military exercises, while providing security assistance and support as needed. These efforts help counter China’s influence regionally, along with the U.S.’ promotion of its Indo-Pacific strategy, which advocates for a free and open region.

The rivalry places the region in a delicate position. While they seek economic opportunities with China, they also continue to depend on the U.S. for security assurances. This balancing act necessitates careful diplomatic navigation to avoid alienating major powers.

Notably, in recent years, India’s engagement with Southeast Asia has grown significantly as the country vies for a foothold as a key regional powerbroker. As a major economic power and a member of the Quadrilateral

Security Dialogue (Quad), India has long sought to expand its influence in the region. India’s “Act East” policy aims to strengthen cultural, economic, and strategic ties with Southeast Asian nations. This is evident in India’s participation in ASEAN-led forums and its involvement in regional security initiatives.

India’s influence is further bolstered by its cultural and historical connections with the region. Countries like Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand share deep-rooted cultural and religious ties with India. This cultural affinity is complemented by India’s economic engagement, which includes trade partnerships and investment in sectors such as information technology and pharmaceuticals.

However, India’s influence in Southeast Asia is often overshadowed by China’s economic power. While India has made strides in deepening its ties with Southeast Asia, it faces challenges in matching China’s scale of investment and infrastructure development. Nevertheless, India’s role as a counterbalance to China, particularly in the context of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics, remains vital.

A LOOK AHEAD:

Looking ahead, Southeast Asia’s geopolitical landscape is expected to remain complex and fluid. The China-U.S. rivalry should only prove to intensify, with both nations vying for influence in the region. This will compel Southeast Asian nations to calibrate their foreign policies to navigate the delicate balance between economic cooperation and security partnerships.

The region’s economic outlook remains promising, with countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam projected to maintain strong growth rates. However, challenges such as environmental sustainability, demographic shifts, and technological advancements will need to be addressed to ensure long-term stability. For instance, Thailand’s aging population and the increasing need for workforce adaptation in response to automation services presents significant hurdles.

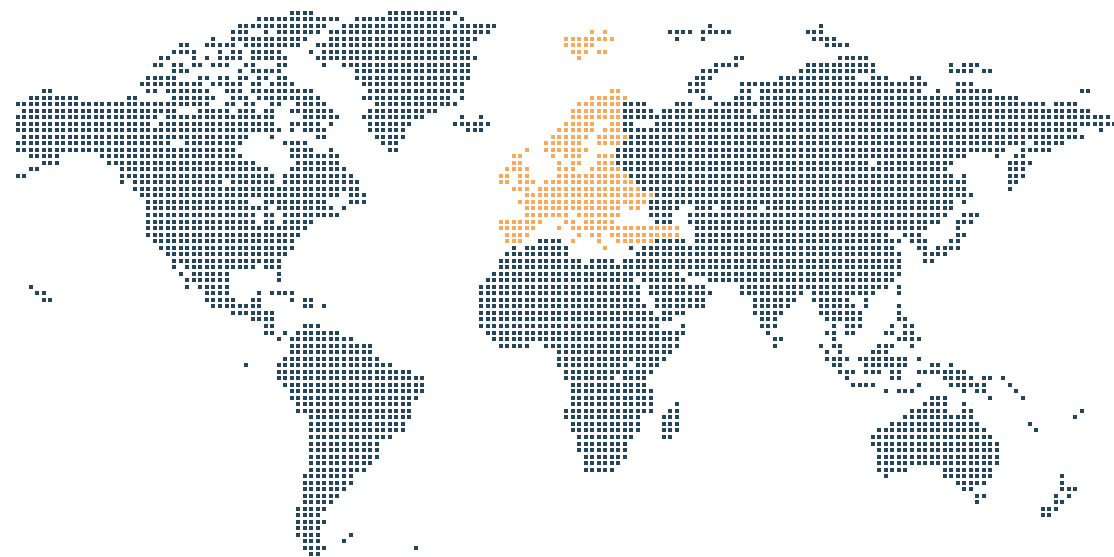
ASEAN’s role as a regional bloc will be essential for maintaining stability and fostering cooperation. The organization’s ability to present a unified front on issues like the South China Sea and economic integration will likely be tested. Upcoming ASEAN Summits and other regional



forums are expected to provide opportunities for member states to articulate their collective vision and tackle emerging challenges.

India’s role and influence in the region is also anticipated to expand, particularly in the areas of maritime security and economic collaborations. As India’s economy continues to grow, its investments in Southeast Asia are also likely to increase, offering an alternative to Chinese influence. Additionally, India’s participation in the Quad and other regional security arrangements will contribute to the broader strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific.

Southeast Asia stands at a pivotal crossroads as it navigates the complexities of a globalized world. The region’s diverse identities, economic aspirations, and strategic interests are intertwined with the broader geopolitical dynamics of the China-U.S. rivalry and India’s increasing influence. As the region looks forward, the ability of Southeast Asian nations to balance these competing interests while maintaining their sovereignty and stability will be paramount. The next few years will be crucial in shaping Southeast Asia’s role in the global order, as it seeks to assert its identity and influence amidst a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape.



EUROPE

The European Union's (EU) Identity Crisis

The EU is facing an identity crisis, largely spurred by a rise in right-wing politics and a series of intersecting crises. Growing support for right-wing parties across several states in the region has been fueled by concerns over immigration, economic instability, and security threats. This political shift has led to a fracturing of social cohesion and heightened tensions within EU institutions, potentially jeopardizing the union's unity and effectiveness.

In recent years, civil unrest levels throughout the EU have increased, as has been observed in the first half of 2024. Demonstrations have risen in response to environmental regulations and policies, socio-economic pressures, and the impact of the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia. As the EU navigates these issues, it faces the challenge of addressing deep-seated grievances while striving to maintain stability and cohesion within the Union.

Far-right-wing parties often capitalize on fears regarding cultural integration and economic strains, perceived by supporters as consequences of lax immigration policies. The anti-immigration rhetoric has intensified due to terrorism concerns regarding the potential of radicalized citizens returning to the EU, and migrants from other regions, such as the Middle East and Africa. The presence of refugee groups and migrant populations across the continent has at times also been perceived as competition for jobs and exacerbated these sentiments.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, there has been steady growth and discontentment with traditional parties. Left- and center-leaning parties and policies contrast sharply with the

promises of right-wing parties that prioritize domestic economics and job security. Rising concerns regarding terrorism and crime have increased support for right-wing parties and groups that advocate for stricter law enforcement and tougher immigration controls.

The 2024 EU parliamentary elections marked a significant rightward shift, with the center-right European People's Party (EPP) gaining a majority of seats in the legislative body. This shift, coupled with a notable increase in popularity of right-leaning parties in France, prompted French President Emmanuel Macron to call for snap parliamentary elections in July. Considering this trend, election results almost mirrored the EU's, as the right-wing National Rally (Rassemblement National), led by Marine Le Pen and its allies, finished third with roughly 37% of the vote. The National Rally Party promotes anti-immigration policies and nationalism. The prospect of a right-wing party winning a majority in parliament mobilized a segment of French youth who demonstrated against the conservative views, expressing shock at the close electoral results.

Typically, when right-wing parties win elections, sporadic civil unrest often ensues, primarily organized and led by the respective country's youth. This was evident in 2022, following the victory of the right-wing nationalist party led by Giorgia Meloni, the Brothers of Italy. Increasing civil unrest highlights a disconnect within societies and reflects a broader identity crisis in the EU. Many social grievances in the EU connect to local government policies but also resonate with global issues. The first half of 2024 saw an uptick in protests, driven by a diverse range of social, economic, and political concerns.

The recent victories of right-wing and neo-Nazi parties



in Germany and Austria reflect a broader trend of political polarization across the region. These electoral outcomes signal a growing dissatisfaction with mainstream politics. Amid economic challenges, social unrest, and complex global issues, many voters feel increasingly alienated by traditional parties. This disenfranchisement often pushes them to cast votes in favor of more extreme alternatives, seeking radical change. The rise of far-right movements, including the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, and Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), highlights this shift. These parties capitalize on nationalistic sentiments, tapping into fears about immigration, economic stagnation, and cultural identity. During periods of perceived crisis, voters on both ends of the political spectrum are more likely to rally behind parties promising significant, even drastic, changes.

In these moments, elections become an avenue for protest, allowing voters to voice their discontent with the status quo. As a result, Europe finds itself grappling with the resurgence of extremist ideologies that thrive on societal divisions and uncertainty.

In 2024, widespread farmers' protests erupted across the region in response to new EU policies aimed at reducing pesticide use and lowering nitrogen emissions. Farmers criticized these measures, claiming them as excessively strict and arguing there is a lack of adequate alternatives. Large tractor convoy protests disrupted major cities in France,

Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland, raising public concerns and resulting in significant overland travel disruption. Additionally, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU lifted tariffs on Ukrainian agricultural imports to support the country's economy, leading to an influx of Ukrainian products into European markets. Many EU farmers viewed this move as undermining their businesses and the cause of decreased market prices. As a result, farmers in Hungary, Poland, and Romania intensified their protests by blocking many border crossings to Ukraine, hindering refugee and non-governmental organization (NGO) humanitarian work and access.

Environmental protests also gained momentum in 2024, with groups like Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil staging high-profile demonstrations demanding stronger climate action. Protests occurred during the G7 summit in Apulia, Italy, in June 2024. Additionally, other climate-related protest actions have been consistently carried out in major cities across the region, with some resulting in localized clashes and the detention of activists. Notably, environmental protests have increasingly targeted airport operations due to growing concern regarding the aviation industry's contribution to climate change. For example, in May 2024, climate activists glued themselves to a taxiway at Munich Airport (MUC), resulting in significant disruption. In the same month, activists blocked private jets at Geneva Airport (GVA) to protest the environmental impact of luxury air travel.

A LOOK AHEAD:

Looking ahead, the political landscape in the EU is expected to remain turbulent, with right-wing parties likely to gain more traction in upcoming elections. This could lead to stricter immigration policies, a rise in nationalism, and a reevaluation of the EU's role and policies. Ongoing social and economic challenges, exacerbated by the Ukraine conflict, is projected to remain prominent. Environmental activism is also poised to escalate, with protests becoming more frequent as climate change concerns intensify. Consequently, the EU will face growing pressure to implement more stringent climate policies.

Navigating these challenges while maintaining unity and its identity will be a significant test for the EU. The potential for civil unrest is high, with a divided populace reacting to both right-wing policies and broader socio-economic and environmental issues. As the EU seeks to recapture its identity, constituents with interests in the region should prepare for increased tensions and a heightened risk of unrest arising from these varied grievances and political concerns.



MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

The Long-term Impact of the Israel-Gaza Conflict: Regional Dynamics & Global Geopolitics

The Israel-Gaza conflict has long been a central issue in Middle Eastern politics, one that reverberates far beyond the immediate region. The 2024 resurgence of hostilities has exacerbated tensions, and the ongoing strife will have deep and lasting implications. Looking forward, it is critical to understand how this enduring conflict will shape the regional and global landscape, not just militarily but in diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian dimensions.

Traditional powerbrokers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States (U.S.), coupled with emerging powerbrokers; namely, China and Qatar, are all involved in shaping the trajectory. The shifting alliances and competing interests of these nations will be instrumental in determining the course of events in the coming year. This piece intends to provide a forecast of the conflict's potential impact on the geopolitical order, with possible scenarios that range from continued escalation to potential diplomatic breakthroughs.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is not just a localized dispute between two peoples. It has evolved into a regional and global issue, implicating major powers and regional stakeholders who are driven by diverse strategic interests. The enduring nature of this conflict, with its roots in territorial disputes and national self-determination, makes it a litmus test for international law, human rights, and geopolitical influence. The actions of major powerbrokers - Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the U.S. - are closely intertwined with their broader foreign policy agendas and their quest for influence in the region.



In recent years, Qatar has positioned itself as a key mediator in the Israel-Palestine conflict, leveraging its diplomatic outreach and strategic partnerships. Despite being a small Gulf state, Qatar has played an outsized role in facilitating dialogue and negotiations between conflicting parties. Its involvement is driven by a desire to enhance its international standing and promote stability in the region. Qatar's mediation efforts have often been instrumental in brokering temporary ceasefires and humanitarian aid arrangements. However, its actions are also influenced by its broader foreign policy objectives, including maintaining a balanced relationship with both the West and regional actors such as Iran and Türkiye - a delicate dance that requires considerable diplomatic agility.



A LOOK AHEAD:

Looking ahead, Qatar's role as a mediator is expected to continue. As one of the few actors capable of engaging with all sides, it is well-positioned to facilitate further negotiations, though these efforts are likely to result in temporary truces rather than lasting peace. The probability of Qatar orchestrating a full diplomatic breakthrough is low, given the intractable nature of the conflict, but its ongoing involvement in conflict mitigation is highly likely.

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN MIDDLE EASTERN GEOPOLITICS IS THE POTENTIAL FOR A STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN, AND CHINA.

Historically, Saudi Arabia and Iran have been regional rivals, with their competition manifesting in proxy conflicts across the region. However, recent signs point to a possible rapprochement between the two, driven by shared concerns over regional stability and the economic benefits of cooperation. China's involvement adds further complexity to this equation. As a rising global power with considerable economic interests in the Middle East, China is keen to secure its energy supply lines and expand its political influence.

A tripartite alliance between these powers is likely to have profound implications for the region. Such a pact could serve as a counterbalance to Western influence, particularly that of the U.S., and reshape the regional order. While the formation of a formalized pact in 2025 is unlikely, the groundwork for closer cooperation is already being laid. Saudi Arabia and Iran have shown a willingness to engage diplomatically, and China is eager to capitalize on any opportunities. A shift towards closer alignment among these countries is likely to emerge as a dominant trend in the coming year, even if it does not fully materialize into a formal alliance.

Saudi Arabia has long been a champion of the Palestinian cause, both as an advocate for Palestinian self-determination and as a provider of financial aid. The Kingdom's support is deeply rooted in its desire to maintain its leadership role in the Muslim world. However, recent moves towards

normalization with Israel, as evidenced by the Abraham Accords, have complicated its stance. Saudi Arabia has not yet joined the Accords, but its tacit support for normalization efforts reflects a pragmatic approach to balancing its geopolitical interests. Looking ahead, Saudi Arabia's position will likely remain ambiguous. On the one hand, it will continue to support the Palestinian cause, but on the other, it will seek to deepen ties with Israel, driven by mutual interests in countering Iranian influence and enhancing regional security. The Kingdom's foreign policy will likely oscillate between these competing priorities in 2025, with a formal peace agreement with Israel remaining unlikely but increased cooperation being highly probable.

Iran's strategic involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict is primarily through its support of militant groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. These organizations serve as key proxies in Iran's broader goal of countering Israeli and U.S. influence in the region. The October 2024 escalations between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which saw heightened cross-border hostilities, are indicative of how these groups can act as flashpoints for broader conflict. Iran's continued financial and military support for Hamas and Hezbollah will likely remain a key feature of the geopolitical landscape in 2025. Despite international sanctions and diplomatic isolation, Iran has shown no signs of curtailing its support for these groups. This will remain a highly likely scenario, with the potential for further escalations in Lebanon and Gaza over the coming year. The downfall of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria late in 2024 has however called into question the ability of Iran to sustain adequate support from its proxies and actions through Damascus.

The U.S. remains Israel's most steadfast ally, providing military aid, political support, and diplomatic cover in international forums. This close relationship is unlikely to change significantly in 2025, regardless of the outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Both major political parties in the U.S. share a commitment to maintaining Israel's security, though the approach to achieving peace in the region may vary. Dependent on the administration that comes into office there may be renewed efforts to mediate a two-state solution. However, such a breakthrough remains unlikely, given the entrenched positions of both Israel and the Palestinian leadership. What is more probable is the continuation of U.S. support for Israel's military operations, especially in response to threats from Hezbollah and Hamas.

A LOOK AHEAD:

Looking ahead, the most likely scenario is the continuation of the status quo, with periodic flare-ups of violence between Israel and Palestinian factions, particularly in Gaza and along the Lebanon border. Hezbollah’s recent escalations could foreshadow a larger, more sustained conflict if Iran decides to intensify its involvement. In this scenario, regional actors will continue to back their respective allies, while the international community remains largely divided. This ongoing instability would likely exacerbate humanitarian crises, increase refugee flows, and create further volatility in global energy markets.

A less likely but possible scenario involves limited diplomatic progress. Qatar’s mediation efforts, along with renewed U.S. and Chinese involvement, could lead to temporary ceasefires or limited agreements on humanitarian access. While a full diplomatic breakthrough remains improbable, the region could see a reduction in hostilities and the beginning of more substantive peace talks in 2025. This scenario hinges on significant political will from both Israel and Palestinian leadership, as well as pressure from international actors.

A realignment of alliances, particularly with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and China, could upend the current geopolitical order. While this scenario is less likely to result in outright conflict, it could trigger a strategic recalibration among other regional powers, including Israel and the U.S. A closer partnership between Saudi Arabia and Iran would reduce regional tensions, though it would also present new challenges for Israel’s security and U.S. influence in the region. This scenario is plausible but remains contingent on continued diplomatic progress between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Israel-Gaza conflict remains a focal point of Middle Eastern geopolitics, with profound implications for regional stability and global affairs. As we look ahead, the involvement of key stakeholders such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and China, alongside the U.S., will be instrumental in shaping the future trajectory of this conflict. The scenarios presented here highlight the range of possible outcomes—from continued conflict and humanitarian crises to potential diplomatic progress and shifting alliances. Each scenario carries its own set of challenges and opportunities, but what remains is that the Israel-Gaza conflict will continue to shape the region's geopolitics for the foreseeable future.



THE AMERICAS

Natural Resource Access & Conflicts in the Americas

Natural resource conflicts are often triggered by material scarcity, coupled with the rapid increase in global or regional economic output that is driven by the need for associated resources. Countries that previously sat on the periphery of the world economy, such as Brazil, are racing upwards and placing increasing demands on energy resources, such as oil and minerals, which only exacerbates the situation, as other regional nations aim to follow.

These nations, regardless of their economic status, will persist in securing valuable deposits such as nickel, cobalt, and lithium – all of which are critical for the transition to clean technologies. While attempting to secure these resources, a third avenue of concern arises – the dangers of aggravating global climate change. Sea levels are forecasted to rise, storms should become more intense, wet zones prone to flooding are likely to soak longer, and dry areas prone to drought are likely to dry out further. Inevitably, the Americas region is apt to succumb to resource conflicts over energy supplies, mineral access, and clean water availability.

The Americas, encompassing North, Central, and South America, are regions rich in diverse natural resources. The United States (U.S.), Canada, and Mexico are particularly notable for their vast reserves of oil, natural gas, minerals, and freshwater. Canada stands out with its significant deposits of critical minerals like nickel, cobalt, and lithium, considered essential for the global transition to clean energy. The U.S., with its substantial oil and natural gas production, has long been a global energy powerhouse. Mexico also has vast quantities of commercially viable minerals.

However, the shift towards renewable energy and the rising demand for minerals used in green technologies has placed new pressures on the bid to secure these resources.

In Latin America, countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile also possess large mineral resources, including copper and lithium. Venezuela, despite its political and economic turmoil, remains one of the world’s largest oil reserve holders. However, access to these resources is often complicated by geopolitical tensions, environmental concerns, and indigenous rights. The Amazon rainforest, spanning across several countries, is another critical resource, not only for its biodiversity but also for its role in carbon sequestration. However, deforestation, driven by agriculture and mining, threatens this vital ecosystem.

During 2024, one of the most contentious disputes in the Americas reemerged between Venezuela and Guyana over the Essequibo region, a territory rich in oil and other resources. Venezuela claims the region based on historical treaties, while Guyana maintains that it rightfully belongs to them. The discovery of significant offshore oil reserves by a large oil and gas company in Guyana’s waters has only intensified the dispute. The Venezuelan government has periodically issued threats and taken aggressive postures, such as dispatching naval patrols, which have raised concerns about potential conflict. The situation remains volatile, with international actors like the U.S. expressing support for Guyana’s sovereignty, further complicating the dynamics.

Brazil’s Amazon rainforest, a vital global carbon sink, has become a flashpoint for resource-related conflicts. The administration of Brazil’s former President Jair Bolsonaro faced international criticism for promoting deforestation and relaxing environmental regulations to boost agricultural

and mining activities. This led to increased tensions with indigenous groups, environmental activists, and the international community. The rise of new leadership committed to environmental preservation has shifted the focus, but illegal logging and mining activities continue, threatening the region’s stability and only likely to spark further conflicts over land and resources.

Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile form the “Lithium Triangle,” a region containing over half of the world’s lithium reserves. As demand for lithium-ion batteries grows with the rise of electric vehicles and renewable energy storage, these countries have become focal points for global mining interests. However, the exploitation of these resources has

led to environmental concerns and local opposition. In Bolivia, political instability has further complicated lithium extraction efforts, with disputes over contracts and profit-sharing. Chile, which has stricter regulations, faces pressure to balance environmental protection with economic growth.

The Western U.S., particularly states like Arizona, California, and Nevada, face severe water scarcity issues. The ongoing megadrought, exacerbated by climate change, has led to declining water levels in major reservoirs like Lake Mead and Lake Powell. This has resulted in conflicts over water rights between agricultural interests, urban areas, and indigenous communities. The situation has also strained relations with Mexico, as the Colorado River, a crucial water source for both countries, continues to shrink.



A LOOK AHEAD:

Looking ahead, increasing tensions over resource control and management in the Americas is projected, driven by rising global demand, environmental challenges, and geopolitical rivalries.

Venezuela and the Essequibo Region:

- The dispute between Venezuela and Guyana over the Essequibo region is poised to escalate.
- With Venezuela’s economy struggling, the government may leverage the conflict to distract from domestic issues and rally nationalist sentiments.
- Meanwhile, Guyana’s burgeoning oil industry, supported by international investments, will continue to develop, potentially leading to further provocations from Venezuela.
- The involvement of major powers like the U.S. could act as a deterrent to outright conflict, but diplomatic solutions may remain elusive, keeping the region on edge.

Water Scarcity and Climate Change:

- In the Western U.S., the situation is expected to worsen as climate change intensifies drought conditions.
- This will likely lead to more stringent water conservation measures and increased legal battles over water rights.
- The agricultural sector, which consumes the majority of the region’s water, may face significant cutbacks, leading to economic repercussions.
- Additionally, cross-border tensions with Mexico could heighten as both countries vie for dwindling water supplies.

The Lithium Triangle and Resource Nationalism:

- The Lithium Triangle will continue to be a critical area of focus as the global transition to green energy accelerates.
- Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile may implement stricter regulations and seek greater control over lithium production, leading to increased resource nationalism.
- This could result in renegotiations of contracts with foreign companies, nationalizations, or the imposition of higher

royalties. Such actions may deter foreign investment and slow down the pace of lithium extraction, potentially impacting global supply chains.

Amazon Rainforest and Environmental Conflicts:

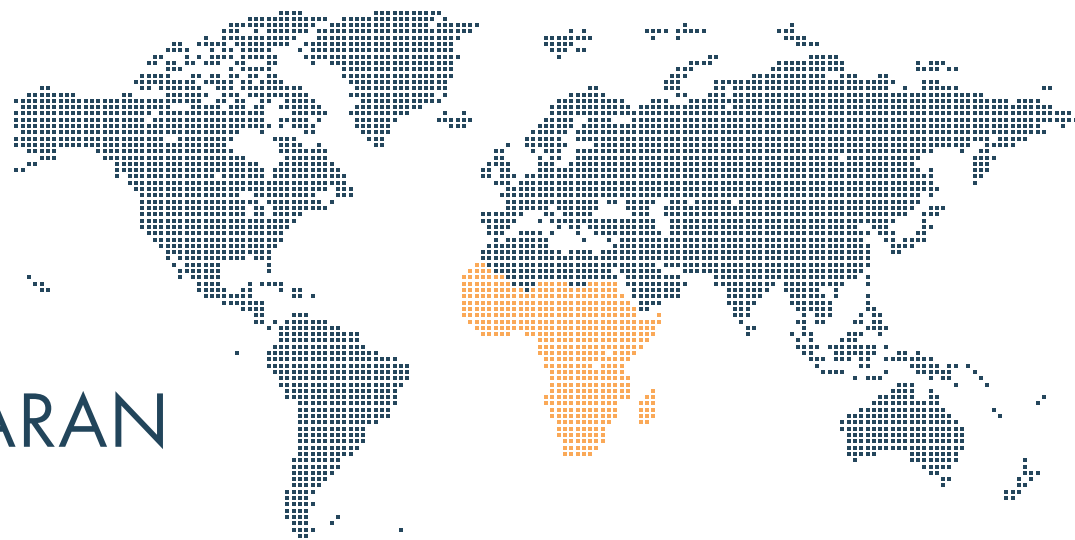
- The protection of the Amazon rainforest will remain a contentious issue. Despite international efforts to preserve this vital ecosystem, illegal activities like logging, mining, and land grabbing are likely to continue.
- Indigenous groups, who often act as stewards of the forest, may increasingly clash with illegal actors and state authorities.
- The new Brazilian government’s policies will be crucial in determining the extent of deforestation and the protection of indigenous rights.
- However, economic pressures and the demand for agricultural land may challenge conservation efforts.

Energy Transition and Geopolitical Shifts:

- The ongoing global energy transition away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy sources will have significant geopolitical implications in the Americas.
- Countries rich in renewable resources, such as Canada and Brazil, may gain greater influence in global energy markets.
- Conversely, nations heavily reliant on fossil fuel exports, like Venezuela, may face economic challenges.
- The push by the U.S. for energy independence through renewables and critical mineral production could reduce its reliance on foreign oil, potentially reshaping its foreign policy priorities.

Countries in the Americas are entering a period of heightened competition and potential conflict emanating over natural resources. While these tensions are driven by a variety of factors, including economic interests, environmental concerns, and geopolitical rivalries, the outcomes will significantly impact the region’s stability and prosperity. As the global demand for resources evolves, the Americas must navigate these challenges carefully to ensure sustainable and equitable development.





SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Regression of LGBTQ+ Rights Across Africa in 2024

In 2024, many African nations witnessed a troubling regression in LGBTQ+ rights, marked by increasing tensions between modern values and conservative cultural beliefs.

CURRENTLY, AROUND **32 OUT OF 52** AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE LAWS THAT CRIMINALIZE SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS.

These laws range from imprisonment to the death penalty, creating a perilous environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. Understanding the forces driving this regression and the aggressive policies enacted by current governments is crucial. Anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric in Africa is fueled predominantly by conservative cultural norms and political agendas.

Politicians across the continent frequently employ anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and policies to appeal to conservative and religious voters, positioning themselves as the protectors or defenders of traditional values and family structures. Such policies also serve as convenient distractions from pressing issues like economic instability, corruption, and governance failures. By focusing on moral and cultural debates, politicians can deflect criticism from other areas of their administration that lack delivery. Additionally, some politicians and organizations portray LGBTQ+ rights as a form of Western influence and new form of colonialism, further stalling progress. This was the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2024, when bishops affiliated with

the Catholic Church were asked if they would bless unions of LGBTQ+ people, and, in response, they voiced negative opinions and refused to bless such unions. Similar sentiments have been echoed in Uganda and Zimbabwe as well. This resistance to change has become the status quo in several African countries, making it increasingly difficult to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

Deep-rooted negative cultural and social attitudes further exacerbate the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ communities in the region. Major religious organizations, both Christian and Muslim, often play significant roles in opposing LGBTQ+ rights. For instance, the Anglican Church of Uganda actively lobbies for laws criminalizing same-sex relations, while the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and the Tanzania Muslim Council (BAKWATA) publicly oppose LGBTQ+ rights, citing religious doctrines. Smaller community churches and other religious groups also wield considerable influence, invariably shaping public opinion and political agendas.

As global LGBTQ+ rights progress, some African countries have responded with increased repression. In February 2024, Ghana’s parliament passed the “Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill,” criminalizing LGBTQ+ individuals and targeting their allies. The bill’s language, particularly the emphasis on ‘Ghanaian Family Values,’ underscores the use of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric to position lawmakers as defenders of ‘traditional values.’ In Uganda, the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act introduced severe penalties, including: life imprisonment and the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality.” This is defined as repeated offenses, involvement with minors, or cases where one partner is HIV-positive. In 2024, efforts to annul the act were rejected by Uganda’s Constitutional Court.

Despite these challenges, there are instances of resilience

and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights in Africa. South Africa stands out as the most progressive African nation, with a constitution that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Same-sex marriage has been legal since 2006, thanks in part to the efforts of former President Nelson Mandela, who played a pivotal role in including sexual orientation in the constitution. Organizations like the Gay and Lesbian Network and OUT Well-being continue to support the LGBTQ+ community in South Africa, providing advocacy, legal support, and healthcare services.

In Kenya, while same-sex relations remain criminalized, some politicians and judges are working to challenge these laws. Former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga has been a vocal advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Organizations such as the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) and the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) actively push for legal reforms. Similarly, Botswana decriminalized same-sex relations in 2019 and has organizations like LEGABIBO (Lesbian, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana) working to support the community.

Understanding the complex interplay of cultural, political, and religious factors is essential for addressing the regression of LGBTQ+ rights in Africa and supporting efforts toward equality and safety for all individuals. Travelers and businesses should be aware of supportive LGBTQ+ organizations and leaders within countries, as these networks can provide critical assistance in times of legal or health crises. By recognizing and supporting these local initiatives, international communities can help foster a more inclusive and safer environment for LGBTQ+ individuals across Africa. Similarly, it must be noted that organizations should be pre-emptively aware of high-risk destinations that could pose elevated risks for LGBTQ+ constituents.

A LOOK AHEAD:

Looking ahead, the landscape of LGBTQ+ rights in Africa is likely to remain complex and difficult. While some countries may continue to resist progress due to entrenched conservative values and political considerations, there are signs of potential incremental changes. South Africa is expected to maintain its position as a leader in LGBTQ+ rights, providing a model for other nations to emulate. Its ongoing support for LGBTQ+ individuals could inspire more progressive policies in neighboring countries.

Conversely, countries with stringent anti-LGBTQ+ laws, such as Uganda and Ghana, may face increasing international pressure to align with global human rights standards. However, significant legislative changes are unlikely without notable shifts in political and cultural attitudes. These countries might witness growing underground

movements and international advocacy pushing for change, but systemic legal reforms will likely remain a long-term objective.

On a more hopeful note, countries like Botswana, which recently decriminalized same-sex relations, could continue to make strides toward greater equality. Activist groups and progressive leaders in these nations may push for broader legal protections, including anti-discrimination laws and recognition of same-sex partnerships.

Overall, while the road to full equality for LGBTQ+ individuals in Africa will likely be long and challenging, the increasing visibility and activism within the continent suggest that 2025 could bring some improvements. Continued international support and solidarity will be crucial in fostering an environment where these changes can take root and flourish.



TRENDS IN RISK MANAGEMENT

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FROM NATURAL DISASTERS TO KIDNAPPING: How CREs Help Organizations Prepare for Crisis Scenarios

Crisis response exercises (CREs) help organizations evaluate emergency response procedures, identify areas for improvement, and foster a collaborative attitude among those responsible for supporting their travelers abroad. Regularly engaging in these exercises is invaluable in helping to create a safe and supportive environment for your travelers.

Crisis response exercises (CREs) can simulate a wide variety of scenarios, depending on the specific risks your organization faces and the nature of your travelers' activities. The possibilities are virtually limitless, allowing you to tailor exercises to the unique challenges of your operations. To help spark ideas for how CREs could be implemented in your own organization, we'll explore three sample scenarios that illustrate the types of situations that could be tested: active shooter, natural disasters, and kidnapping. These examples serve as a starting point, but the real value of CREs lies in their flexibility to address the specific risks and needs of your organization.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

For an active shooter situation, crisis response exercises (CREs) offer a way to test preparedness without the need for an elaborate, full-scale drill. Conducting an in-person, full-scale active shooter drill can be both inefficient and costly, often requiring the temporary closure of the building and suspension of office operations. In contrast, an active shooter CRE can be tailored organization-wide, department-specific, or at the individual level, addressing the unique responsibilities of each while still testing all aspects of the response plan. Because such events are rare, many individuals may have limited situational awareness despite prior training. A CRE of this nature helps assess this awareness and highlights areas where response plans or individual preparedness may need improvement.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Natural disasters can present unique challenges depending on their severity and location, especially for travelers. While full-scale simulations may not always be practical,



a CRE allows participants to be effectively prepared by walking them through the impacts of natural disasters and the steps involved in evacuation. Participants can test their knowledge and preparedness without having to engage in a full evacuation. It's important not only to inform travelers about evacuation procedures but also to clarify the roles of stakeholders in ensuring their safety. Natural disasters can disrupt travel and transportation, making it crucial to review how logistics may be affected, while also helping to manage expectations. For groups traveling to areas prone to specific types of natural disasters, reviewing local protocols during a CRE can also help ensure a more practical, well-informed response.

KIDNAPPING

Many organizations, especially NGOs, operate in areas where the risk of kidnapping is high. Kidnapping incidents can vary greatly, with hostages held anywhere from a few hours to several months or longer. Given the unpredictable nature of such events, it's difficult to fully prepare individuals for the complexities of long-term captivity. CREs for this



scenario acknowledge that those responding to the crisis and the kidnapped individuals themselves have different needs for information and guidance. Effective communication during a kidnapping is critical, and CREs help enhance preparedness for coordinating with local authorities, partner organizations, and other third parties involved in supporting those affected by the incident.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY

Given the many individuals and departments involved in responding to emergencies both domestically and overseas, CREs enable key personnel to be effectively briefed on their roles without the need for an impractical full-scale simulation. After conducting CREs, organizations gain valuable data and feedback to assess the effectiveness of their emergency response plans and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, the importance of regularly conducting CREs, especially for those overseeing or part of an organization's crisis management team, cannot be overstated. Routine practice through defined CREs ensures organizations remain prepared and continuously assess their exposure and ability to respond to emergencies.

“Conducting crisis response exercises (CREs) serves a critical function in strengthening and advancing my travel risk management program. CREs help prepare stakeholders who support our travelers to respond to emergencies and raise awareness with leadership about available resources and protocols for incident response.

Exercises also play an important role in stress-testing my incident response protocols and identifying gaps where additional preparation is needed. They also act as a catalyst for critical conversations among participants allowing them to discuss varied approaches, risk tolerances, and priorities. A CRE allows these conversations to occur in the context of a crisis without having the high-stakes and urgency of an actual crisis.

Working with an outside partner to conduct CREs is extremely beneficial because it enables me to participate actively in the exercise as I would in a real-life incident response. This allows me to benefit from and learn lessons from the exercise along with other participants. Partnering with On Call International to conduct these has been additionally instructive as it has strengthened the partnership and fostered mutual understanding of each other's protocols and abilities.”

Shaun Jamieson, International Risk Manager
Iowa State University

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RISK MANAGEMENT:

Navigating Resource Conflicts, Water Wars, and Volatility

Climate change presents a complex, multifaceted challenge, intertwining environmental shifts with significant geopolitical implications. As the planet warms, the risks associated with climate change grow more pronounced, requiring comprehensive risk management strategies to mitigate potential fallout. This article explores the intersection of climate change and risk management, focusing on the volatility arising from resource conflicts, water scarcity, insecurity linked to extreme weather events, and the ensuing shortages of food and supplies.

ENVIRONMENTAL SHIFTS AND EMERGING CONFLICTS

Global climate change, driven largely by human activities like fossil fuel consumption and deforestation, is reshaping risk management perspectives. Rising temperatures, altered precipitation, more frequent extreme weather, and sea level rise are amplifying existing vulnerabilities and creating new risks across ecosystems, economies, and societies. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, and social systems.

Additionally, climate change is intensifying political and resource-based conflicts, particularly in regions already struggling with instability and inequality. Competition for shrinking resources—such as water, arable land, and natural resources—has intensified, while displacement from extreme weather events or rising sea levels further strains resources, exacerbating social tensions and increasing the potential for conflict.

WATER WARS

In regions like the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where water scarcity has long been a challenge, climate change exacerbates competition for access to vital water resources. Disputes over water rights, such as those involving the Nile and Jordan River basins, can escalate into conflict. Additionally, climate-driven migration—both internal and across borders—can strain social cohesion, heightening inter-group tensions and leading to further resource and territorial conflicts.

As climate change alters precipitation patterns and accelerates glacier retreat, many regions are facing unprecedented water shortages, intensifying competition among communities, nations, and industries. The term “water wars” refers to conflicts—ranging from local disputes to interstate tensions—over access to and control of water resources.

A key example is the ongoing dispute between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile River. The dam threatens Egypt’s vital downstream water supply, critical for its agriculture and domestic needs. The negotiations highlight the complexities of managing water resources amid climate change, with significant implications for regional stability.

THREATS TO SUPPLY CHAINS

Climate change-driven weather events—such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes—pose significant risks to food and supply chains, creating instability in global markets. These disruptions can devastate agricultural production, causing

food shortages and price spikes, with vulnerable populations in developing countries bearing the greatest impact.

Recent events like Cyclone Idai in Mozambique and the Horn of Africa drought underscore the interconnectedness of climate change, food security, and supply chain resilience. Disruptions in food and commodity supply chains ripple globally, affecting the availability and cost of essential goods. Effective risk management must focus on building resilience to climate-induced shocks.

Climate change also heightens competition for scarce resources—such as energy, land, and water—leading to conflicts at local, national, and international levels. Disputes over resource control, exacerbated by climate change, can escalate into armed conflict, destabilizing regions and undermining global peace and security. This intersection highlights the urgent need for sustainable resource management and conflict resolution.

POTENTIAL CONFLICT IN THE ARCTIC REGION

The Arctic exemplifies the intersection of climate change and resource conflicts. As sea ice melts, new shipping routes and access to vast fossil fuel reserves have sparked competition among Arctic nations for territorial claims and resource rights. This growing rivalry highlights the urgent need for international cooperation and governance to manage resource extraction sustainably and prevent geopolitical tensions.

In conclusion, climate change presents unprecedented risks to global stability, exacerbating volatility, deepening conflicts, and threatening vital resources. Effective risk management must take a holistic approach, integrating environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic resilience. Addressing climate challenges requires coordinated efforts at local, national, and international levels, combining policy, innovation, and community resilience. By prioritizing proactive strategies and sustainable development, societies can better navigate climate complexities and build a more resilient future for generations to come.



INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WITH MEDICATIONS: What Travelers Should Know

Many travelers are unaware that each country has different regulations regarding the medications they can bring in for personal use. Arriving unprepared can lead to delays at customs, confiscation of medications, or even arrest. This article provides general guidelines to help travelers navigate international travel with medications with ease.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC MEDICATION REGULATIONS

Each country has its own rules regarding which medications can be brought in and the quantity allowed. These regulations apply to both short-term and long-term travelers. Some countries limit travelers to a 5- or 7-day supply, while others may permit up to a three-month supply. Certain medications also require special permits, which can take several weeks to obtain. To avoid issues, it's crucial for travelers to research these regulations in advance and ensure they have the necessary documentation from both their physician and, if needed, the destination country.

RISKS OF SUBSTANDARD OR COUNTERFEIT MEDICATIONS

When traveling abroad, travelers should be cautious about purchasing medications from unfamiliar sources. Counterfeit or substandard medications, which may appear identical to genuine products, can contain harmful or inactive ingredients, leading to treatment failure or serious health risks. To minimize these dangers, travelers should avoid buying medications while traveling unless necessary. If purchasing is necessary, travelers should buy medications from reputable, licensed pharmacies, ensure they're in original packaging, and verify they match the prescribed medication.



EXPERT ADVICE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

The Medical team at On Call International is well-versed in the medication regulations of individual countries, including details on procedures for obtaining special permits or certificates. They can also provide guidance for traveling with injectable medications, temperature-sensitive medications, medical implants, and other medical equipment.

To ensure a smooth journey with medications, travelers should consider these general tips from On Call's Medical Team:

Doctor's Letter: Carry a signed and dated letter from your doctor that includes:

- Traveler's name, date of birth, and passport number
- The length of time you'll be in each country
- The generic name and dosage of each medication
- The amount of medication you're carrying
- The duration of use for each medication
- The medical condition the medication is treating

Original Packaging: Always carry medications in their original, labeled containers.

Prescription Copies: Bring copies of your prescriptions for each medication.

Carry-On Luggage: Pack your medications in your carry-on bag, not your checked luggage.

Extra Supply: Bring enough medication for the entire trip, plus an additional 1–2-week supply in case of delays in your return travel.

Check Medication Status: Before traveling, verify that the medications you're carrying are allowed in your destination country. Check if you need special permission to bring them in.

Medication Refills: If you need to refill prescriptions while traveling, visit a local physician to obtain a prescription and purchase medication from a licensed pharmacy.

In conclusion, traveling internationally with medications requires careful planning and awareness of each destination's unique regulations. By researching country-specific rules, avoiding counterfeit medications, and following expert advice, travelers can ensure a smooth and safe journey. Preparing documentation, packing medications appropriately, and being proactive about potential refills are essential steps for maintaining health and avoiding complications abroad. For further guidance, travelers can always rely on resources like On Call International's Medical Team, which can help travelers stay informed, plan ahead, and travel with more confidence and ease.

REPATRIATION OF REMAINS:

An Often Overlooked Yet Crucial Aspect of Emergency Assistance

Each year, thousands of travelers pass away while working, studying, or traveling abroad. For organizations that deploy personnel overseas, the repatriation of remains is a critical yet often overlooked element of comprehensive emergency assistance. While this aspect of emergency response may not always be top of mind, having a clear plan in place for repatriating remains can significantly reduce the stress and uncertainty faced by both the bereaved and the organization.

Ensuring that both organizations and travelers are aware of the support available in such tragic circumstances is an integral part of any robust risk management or duty of care strategy.

KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE REPATRIATION ASSISTANCE INCLUDE:

Storing or Transporting Remains: Ensuring that the remains are handled with the utmost care, either by storing them securely at a local facility or arranging for their immediate transportation to an appropriate location for preparation. This includes coordination with local authorities, transportation providers, and any necessary embalming or preservation services, all in compliance with local laws and international shipping regulations.

Communicating with Family Members: The loss of a loved one, particularly when it occurs far from home, is an incredibly emotional and overwhelming experience. In addition to navigating their grief, family members are often confronted with the complex and sensitive task of repatriating the deceased's remains. During this time, it's crucial to have continuous communication with the family to guide them through the process, ensuring they are fully informed of each step, while also handling legal, cultural, and language barriers that may arise during this difficult time.

Respecting Family Wishes: Recognizing that each family may have unique customs, beliefs, and preferences regarding the preparation and handling of



their loved one's remains. Prioritizing clear communication to ensure these wishes are fully understood and respected. Whether it involves specific embalming procedures, the inclusion of personal items, or the type of final arrangements, making every effort to fulfill the family's requirements with compassion and dignity should be of utmost importance.

Coordinating with Funeral Homes: Working closely with both sending and receiving funeral homes to manage the logistical details of the repatriation process. This includes ensuring that all required documentation is properly completed, coordinating with local authorities for necessary permits, and facilitating communication between parties to ensure compliance with both local regulations and international guidelines. Additionally, navigating the differences in funeral customs and traditions across cultures, religions, and regions in effort of meeting the deceased family's expectations as closely as possible.



Supporting Travel Arrangements: In addition to coordinating the repatriation of remains, assisting the deceased's traveling companion with any necessary travel arrangements is a key part of the process. This includes helping with flight changes, accommodation bookings, and any other adjustments needed to support the surviving family member or companion during this difficult time.

Monitoring Transportation: Throughout the entire repatriation process, it's critical to carefully track the remains during transport to ensure that they are handled with care and reach their destination safely. This includes maintaining constant communication with the transport carriers, monitoring every stage of the journey, from the initial pickup to arrival at the final resting place. This diligent oversight ensures that the remains are

returned in a timely and respectful manner, with full compliance to international transport protocols and local regulations.

Repatriation of remains involves several critical steps, including the preparation of necessary documentation, coordination with local authorities, and the transportation of the deceased to their home country. Both organizations and the families of bereaved travelers may find managing these arrangements overwhelming on their own. In such cases, collaborating with a trusted emergency assistance resource is invaluable, providing expertise in navigating complex logistics and offering support throughout each stage of the process.

NAVIGATING LGBTQ+ TRAVEL: Essential Safety Advice, Considerations, and Resources

Traveling as a member of the LGBTQ+ community comes with unique challenges—and these challenges vary widely from country to country. Safety and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals can greatly vary depending on the destination's culture, legal framework, and prevailing social attitudes. Awareness of these risks and proactive planning are crucial for safe travel.

PRE-DEPARTURE PLANNING & RESEARCH

Researching a destination's legal and social environment is essential for LGBTQ+ travelers to understand potential risks and legal challenges. Travelers do not necessarily have to avoid certain locations, but they should be aware of local laws and cultural attitudes that could affect the LGBTQ+ community in their destinations of interest. While local laws might permit LGBTQ+ identities, societal attitudes could still pose significant threats. Before the trip takes place, travelers should inquire about the safety of their destination before departure:

- What are the legal rights and protections for LGBTQ+ people in the destination?
- Are there any laws that criminalize or restrict LGBTQ+ identities, expressions, or behaviors?
- Are there any laws that recognize or support LGBTQ+ rights, such as marriage equality, anti-discrimination, or hate crime laws?
- What are the social and cultural attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people in the destination? Are they generally accepted, tolerated, or rejected by the majority of the population? Are there any specific groups or regions that are more or less LGBTQ+-friendly than others?
- Are there any visible signs of LGBTQ+ presence or activism, such as pride events, pride flags, or LGBTQ+ organizations?
- Are there any previous reports or incidents of



violence, harassment, or discrimination against LGBTQ+ people or travelers? How likely are they to occur and how severe are they?

- How do the local authorities and the general public react to such incidents? How can LGBTQ+ travelers avoid them?

LOCAL LAWS

Understanding local laws is crucial, as some regions may enforce laws against LGBTQ+ expressions or falsely prosecute individuals under public indecency laws. In many countries, identifying as LGBTQ+ is illegal. In certain destinations, individuals can be barred from entering a country or face arrest if they are suspected of engaging in or promoting certain behaviors. For example, in past instances, members of the LGBTQ+ community have been detained for waving the LGBTQ+ pride flag at events, while others have been entrapped by local law enforcement, and even blackmailed, for using LGBTQ+ dating apps. For some countries, specifically identifying as LGBTQ+ is not illegal by law, but individuals could still be prosecuted under indecency charges. Due to the threat of legal action, some hotels may even require LGBTQ+ couples to book a room with two beds rather than one.



SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While conducting research on a destination's legal stance toward the LGBTQ+ community is important, travelers should also be aware that local laws and societal attitudes are not the same. Although identifying as LGBTQ+ may be legal in a specific country, it could still be frowned upon. Displays of affection considered innocent in some locations, like touching or holding hands, may be against cultural or religious practices (even for heterosexual couples) in other countries.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION & MEDICATION

Transgender travelers face additional risks if their documents do not align with their presentation, potentially leading to travel disruptions. Prior to travel, all documents should be up to date with the traveler's gender and name. If two documents vary in information, there may be increased difficulties and stops/checks at security points. If a passport shows an "X" in the sex field, especially when crossing international borders, it may result in impediments by immigration officers.

If a traveler is carrying medication that may correlate with reassignment therapy, it is advised to discuss alternative explanations for the medication with a doctor prior to travel. The medication may be questioned while abroad in certain countries.

OTHER SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

As a general rule for travelers, staying aware of surroundings, being mindful of accepted dress codes, and remaining discreet is the safest option when traveling to any new location. Additionally, travelers could use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) when using the Internet and Social

Media Platforms to help keep their personal information safe and secure; however, it must be noted that the use of such technologies could be deemed illegal in some countries. As a precaution, travelers should be very careful of any information uploaded to social media and always use discretion when disclosing personal information.

ADDITIONAL TRIP PLANNING RESOURCES

The International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) is a trusted LGBTQ+ professional association, representing travel and hospitality providers on six continents. IGLTA's approved members include LGBTQ+ friendly accommodations, transport, destinations, service providers, travel advisors, tour operators, events, and travel media in over 75 countries around the world.

OPEN DIALOGUE

Risk management professionals should establish confidential channels where travelers can express concerns and seek guidance, ensuring they feel supported throughout their journey. Establishing such channels can encourage LGBTQ+ individuals to ask questions and address concerns prior to their travels. Furthermore, organizations should leverage liaisons with a travel risk management partner who is available to assist LGBTQ+ travelers, should they feel unsafe abroad.

In conclusion, by staying informed, being proactive, and utilizing credible resources and risk management support, LGBTQ+ travelers can make more confident and empowered decisions for all their trips abroad. Ultimately, thoughtful planning and an understanding of the destination's environment are key to navigating the complexities of LGBTQ+ travel and ensuring a positive experience abroad.

NAVIGATING FOREIGN LAWS AND CUSTOMS: Essential Considerations for Travelers

Foreign laws and customs can be an unexpected challenge for travelers, many of whom may not be aware of specific regulations in the countries they visit.

TRAVELERS ARE SUBJECT TO **LOCAL LAWS**, REGARDLESS OF HOW MINOR OR UNFAMILIAR A RULE MAY SEEM.

Penalties for breaking these laws, whether fines, imprisonment, or more severe consequences, can be significant. However, by staying informed and understanding the local laws and customs, travelers can minimize the risk of legal trouble or harassment. The following examples highlight common areas where travelers may face penalties and emphasize the importance of researching regulations before traveling.

CLOTHING AND DRESS CODES

Clothing is a common cause of fines and harassment for foreign travelers. An item of clothing that may be perfectly acceptable at home can be considered offensive—or even illegal—abroad. For example, in Greece, heels are prohibited at ancient monuments to prevent damage to the historical sites. In France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, it's illegal to wear flip-flops or slippers while driving, a rule rooted in safety but also cultural norms.

Many countries also have dress codes for sacred sites, reflecting religious or cultural expectations of modesty. In Bali, for instance, visitors to Hindu and Buddhist temples are required to wear sarongs. Likewise, religiously conservative nations often restrict access to places of worship for those wearing inappropriate attire, such as bare shoulders or legs, or in some cases, women may be asked to cover their heads.

Clothing laws extend beyond religious sites as well. Camouflage print, for example, is banned in several countries, particularly in regions with internal conflicts, where wearing such patterns could lead to mistaken identification as a security threat. Countries in Africa and the Caribbean have strict regulations against camouflage clothing, bags,



and materials for this reason. To minimize the risk of harassment or legal trouble, travelers should be aware of such dress codes, and tour operators often provide guidance to help avoid issues, particularly in destinations with specific clothing bans.

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Importing or carrying prohibited items is a significant risk for foreign travelers, and in some cases, can lead to severe penalties, including imprisonment. For example, U.S. citizens have been arrested in the Caribbean and elsewhere for carrying small amounts of live ammunition in their luggage. A high-profile case involved a professional athlete detained in Russia for ten months for possessing vape cartridges containing cannabis oil, while another U.S. national remains imprisoned in Russia for carrying a small amount of medically prescribed marijuana.

These incidents highlight the importance of understanding local laws regarding prohibited items—what may

be legal at home does not guarantee immunity abroad. Travelers should also be aware of export restrictions, such as laws prohibiting the removal of ivory souvenirs from certain African countries, which can result in heavy fines or imprisonment.

PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

Public displays of affection (PDA) can lead to legal complications for travelers, as several countries enforce strict regulations on intimate relationships and physical intimacy. While the enforcement of these laws may vary, actions such as holding hands, kissing, or other forms of PDA can result in significant penalties, including imprisonment. Countries like Egypt, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have laws that may lead to lengthy sentences for violating local norms. Some regions still impose physical punishments, such as flogging or even capital punishment. Additionally, certain nations employ religious police to enforce public conduct, including PDA. Although foreign travelers are often given some leeway, these laws may still apply in some jurisdictions. To minimize risk, travelers are advised to exercise discretion and modesty in public to avoid unwanted scrutiny or legal issues.

LÈSE-MAJESTÉ LAWS

Lèse-majesté laws, which criminalize defamation of a country's monarchy or state, pose a unique challenge for

travelers. It is noteworthy how many nations have legislation surrounding this and have enforced it in recent times. Typically, countries with these laws still have a monarchy in some form, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Spain. However, there are similar frameworks in autocratic nations to protect a regime, such as in Belarus and the People's Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea). However, some of the world's strictest Lèse-majesté laws are in Thailand. Officially in place since 1957, it criminalizes defamatory, insulting, or threatening remarks towards the monarchy. In recent years, it has been used against political opponents, particularly following popular protest movements. Though infrequently enforced concerning foreign nationals, they are not exempt from this rule; in 2007, a Swiss national was sentenced to ten years for defacing pictures of the royal family.

As Mark Twain once said, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." As international travel brings the world together, cultural misunderstandings may seem inevitable; however, a little bit of sensitivity goes a long way in ensuring a smooth international travel experience. Moreover, it is the responsibility of travelers to educate themselves on the local laws of a country or destinations that they plan to visit, otherwise one could face the potential of being on the wrong side of the law and customs.



TRAVEL RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE: Utilizing Apps for Real-Time Assistance

As the world becomes increasingly digital, mobile applications designed to assist organizations and travelers have gained significant popularity. These apps provide real-time alerts about potential threats, facilitate instant communication with key contacts, and offer immediate access to emergency assistance. In the event of a crisis, the ability to quickly exchange information, coordinate responses, and ensure timely support is a crucial advantage that travel apps offer, enhancing both organizational preparedness and traveler safety.

By leveraging travel risk management apps and communication methods, organizations can improve traveler compliance with risk protocols, ensuring both duty of care and individual responsibility are effectively managed during travel.

REAL-TIME INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS

Access to timely and relevant information is essential for international travelers, yet obtaining such data quickly can often be a challenge. Travel apps allow both individuals and organizations to track and monitor incidents that could impact safety and security. These apps provide real-time notifications—via email or SMS—about emerging threats, including transportation disruptions, natural disasters, political unrest, and health emergencies. Additionally, location-based alerts can notify travelers of potential risks in their immediate surroundings, helping them make informed decisions and proactively mitigate risks.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Travel apps play a critical role in ensuring the safety of organizations and individuals during emergencies by maintaining open communication channels. These apps enable travelers to report their safety status, allowing

organizations to monitor employee locations and facilitate prompt assistance or evacuations. With varying emergency protocols across countries, travel apps also provide tools for contacting local emergency services or initiating larger-scale responses like search and rescue missions. Key features, such as real-time check-ins or SOS beacons, help travelers quickly connect with response teams, ensuring effective crisis management when time is of the essence.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

While travel apps offer valuable benefits, certain considerations must be addressed. Travel apps depend on local internet connectivity and telecommunications networks, which may be disrupted during political unrest or government-imposed restrictions, rendering communication tools inoperable. To mitigate this, organizations should proactively train personnel traveling to such regions on potential connectivity risks. Additionally, the digitization of travel risk management introduces the risk of cyber threats and data breaches. To safeguard against these vulnerabilities, organizations and travelers must implement robust cybersecurity measures, including encrypted communication channels and two-factor authentication, to protect sensitive data.

To conclude, apps that help travelers proactively mitigate risks while traveling are becoming the norm instead of the exception. Travel apps can ensure that constituents are accurately informed on local information, contact others internationally, and help travelers and organizations receive emergency responses in a short time. By embracing innovation and travel applications, organizations can fulfill their duty to keep their employees safe and travelers can ensure they have the information and capabilities needed to mitigate potential risks.

NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL DANGERS OF CYBERCRIME IN THE MODERN TRAVEL LANDSCAPE

As global travel continues to rise, the travel sector faces an alarming surge in cybercrime. This is driven by a confluence of factors: the increasing dependence on digital technologies, the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), and the high value of personally identifiable information (PII). This piece explores the complexities of cybercrime in the travel sector, highlighting the vulnerabilities of travelers and proposing actionable strategies for risk mitigation.

ADVANCEMENTS IN AI FOR TRAVEL

Like many aspects of modern life, the travel industry has embraced digital transformation, offering travelers unprecedented convenience and service access. From online bookings and digital boarding passes to mobile apps for in-flight entertainment, the reliance on digital technologies is ubiquitous. However, this digital integration has also opened new avenues for cybercriminals.

Advancements in AI have made it easier for malicious actors to perpetrate cybercrimes. AI tools can now generate complex phishing emails and replicate legitimate coding patterns to bypass security protocols. At a recent International Conference on Cyber Security, United States authorities highlighted how these capabilities enable even less technically skilled individuals to execute sophisticated attacks. Consequently, the travel sector has become a prime target for cybercriminals, who exploit the sector's extensive data collection practices.

CYBERCRIME: RISKS AND COUNTERMEASURES

One of the primary motivations for cybercrime in the travel sector is the economic value of travelers' data. Personally identifiable information (PII) is a lucrative commodity on the open and dark web, and travel companies hold a wealth of such data. Information like passport details, credit card numbers, and loyalty program credentials can be used for identity theft, financial fraud, and even targeted phishing attacks. The significant influx of travel post-pandemic has led to a marked increase in stolen PII. Cybercriminals



have developed a sophisticated understanding of the travel industry's data collection practices, targeting everything from reservation systems to rewards programs.

Business travelers are particularly vulnerable, as they often carry sensitive corporate information. The proliferation of fake Wi-Fi hotspots and public charging stations, which can compromise devices, exemplifies the tactics employed by cybercriminals. Furthermore, changes in border control policies, such as increased scrutiny of electronic devices, introduce additional cyber risks. These policies can potentially lead to data exposure or tampering, further complicating the security landscape for international business travelers.

For organizations with extensive business travel needs, the development of tailored cybersecurity policies and procedures is paramount. These policies should emphasize data confidentiality and restrict access to sensitive information. One effective measure is providing employees traveling to high-risk countries with "clean" devices that contain no sensitive data and are checked or wiped clean after travel. This practice minimizes the risk of data breaches, even if a device is compromised or inspected by foreign border/immigration officials.

AWARENESS: A CRUCIAL LINE OF DEFENSE

In July 2024, China became the latest country to enact regulations allowing national security authorities to inspect electronic devices, such as smartphones and personal computers, at border points, based solely on suspicion for signs of espionage. This law applies to all travelers, including foreign nationals, raising concerns about arbitrary enforcement and data security risks. This brings to light that regardless of the intended destination, travelers should anticipate increased scrutiny and potential operational disruptions. To safeguard against these risks, it is recommended to use clean devices that do not contain sensitive information, encrypt and back up important data outside of known hotspots for cybercrime, and consult with legal compliance and company Information Technology experts. Cybersecurity training can further help protect personal and business data.

Additionally, practicing enhanced measures such as avoiding sensitive transactions on public networks, using strong and unique passwords, and being cautious with public charging stations is critical for ensuring data safety and security. Utilizing Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) is highly recommended, as they encrypt data and provide a layer of security against potential eavesdropping. Travelers should also minimize the number of devices they carry and ensure that these devices are secure, especially when passing through border controls.

In conclusion, the rise of cybercrime in the travel sector reflects broader vulnerabilities introduced by our increasing reliance on digital technologies. As cybercriminals continue to exploit the intersection of AI advancements and the travel boom, both travelers and organizations must remain vigilant. The digital economy places a high value on personal data, making it an attractive target for malicious actors.



SECURING THE MISSION: Practical Risk Management for NGOs & Faith-Based Organizations

In recent years, aid workers from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) have faced increasingly complex challenges in their efforts to support vulnerable populations around the world. In such environments, NGOs and FBOs often find themselves navigating delicate political landscapes. Their critical work—delivering food, medical care, and other resources—offers immediate relief while also helping to shape a vision of hope and recovery for local communities. However, these organizations may encounter opposition due to their neutral stance and the life-saving aid they provide, which can challenge existing power dynamics in these regions.

The increased targeting of humanitarian workers highlights the critical importance of proactive risk management strategies to safeguard their well-being. By prioritizing comprehensive training, implementing effective risk mitigation plans, and addressing the unique challenges faced by diverse groups within the NGO and faith-based sectors, organizations can foster safer environments for those committed to humanitarian service. In this article, we'll examine a variety of risk management strategies tailored to the needs of the NGO and FBO communities, emphasizing practical approaches to preparing teams for the complexities of operating in high-risk and unstable environments.

EDUCATION AND GROUP TRAININGS

Hostile Environment and Emergency First Aid Training (HEFAT) equips aid workers with crucial skills to safely navigate high-risk environments and respond effectively to medical emergencies. This training often includes cultural awareness components, enabling workers to better understand and respect local social, political, and cultural dynamics. Such understanding is vital for building trust and minimizing the risk of unintentional harm.



Crisis Response Exercises (CREs) further enhance preparedness by simulating realistic scenarios to test response protocols. These exercises strengthen team cohesion, identify areas for improvement, and support the ongoing refinement of crisis management capabilities, ensuring that teams can respond swiftly and effectively.

PRACTICAL PERSONAL SAFETY TOOLS

Aid workers are encouraged to carry essential safety tools, such as advanced first aid kits, hidden money pouches, discreet wedding rings (which can serve as a subtle deterrent to unwanted attention), and door-stop alarms. These tools enhance personal security by ensuring access to critical medical supplies, protecting valuables, and preventing unauthorized entry into accommodations. When combined with comprehensive training and proactive risk mitigation strategies, these tools provide vital support in safeguarding aid workers operating in diverse and high-risk environments.



ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS

Road safety awareness is paramount, as vehicle accidents are a leading cause of fatalities among aid workers. Vehicles should be properly maintained and equipped with essential supplies, including permits, licenses, water, extra fuel, first aid kits, food, and clothing. Organizations must ensure that drivers are familiar with local conditions and routes while adhering to safety and security protocols.

Checkpoints and roadblocks introduce additional risks, often involving interrogations or threats. Aid workers should remain calm, have relevant documents readily available, cooperate with authorities, and comply with local laws. Staying informed about travel advisories, securing valuables, and maintaining patience are crucial for safely navigating these challenges.

COMMUNICATIONS: CONTINUITY PLANNING

Communication blackouts—whether due to political unrest, natural disasters, or technical issues—can leave aid workers isolated and vulnerable. To mitigate this risk, it's vital to maintain offline communication tools such as maps, emergency contact lists, radios, and satellite phones, ensuring compliance with local regulations. Proactive measures like setting communication windows, staying informed on local developments, and having contingency plans in place are key to navigating communication disruptions effectively.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL STAFF

Local staff are particularly vulnerable, often bearing the brunt of attacks in conflict zones, with some studies indicating that up to 90% of targeted aid workers are local nationals. Despite their critical role, they are often overlooked when it comes to safety and support, highlighting the need for organizations to address this disparity. Strengthening local capacity, providing essential

resources, and offering targeted support are crucial steps in ensuring their well-being. Local staff also face additional challenges such as limited legal protections, discrimination, political pressures, and high-stress environments, all of which can undermine their safety and effectiveness. Prioritizing their security and well-being is essential to the success of humanitarian efforts and the long-term sustainability of local partnerships.

POST-DEPLOYMENT PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Psychological support for aid workers is essential, given the high-stress and often traumatic environments in which they operate. Stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges are common among those working in conflict zones, disaster areas, or situations of extreme hardship. Providing psychological support enables aid workers to process these experiences, manage their mental health, and build resilience, which is crucial for both their well-being and job performance. Regular access to counseling services, peer support networks, and stress management training can help mitigate burnout and ensure that aid workers are better equipped to handle the emotional demands of their roles. Ultimately, prioritizing mental health not only enhances the effectiveness of aid workers but also helps sustain their long-term capacity to deliver vital humanitarian assistance.

In the face of escalating global challenges, NGOs and faith-based organizations must adopt comprehensive risk management strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of their workers. From specialized training programs to practical safety tools and psychological support, a holistic approach is essential for preparing teams to navigate high-risk environments. By investing in proactive risk management and continuous support, organizations can not only protect their teams, but also enhance the long-term impact of their life-saving work.

MANAGING DIVERSE RISKS ACROSS ACADEMIA: A Comprehensive Approach to Traveler Safety

In today's interconnected world, academic institutions remain at the forefront of research, education, and innovation. However, alongside their invaluable contributions, they face a unique set of risk management challenges. Whether it's faculty and staff attending international conferences, undergraduates embarking on their first study abroad experience, or researchers navigating the complexities of global fieldwork in a high-risk environment, each traveler brings distinct profiles and vulnerabilities. The varying risk thresholds across institutions, combined with the nature of academic research and potential faith-based affiliations, only add complexity to the risk landscape. As such, a tailored, comprehensive approach to risk management is essential to effectively meet the duty of care requirements for academic travelers. In this article, we will delve into the key risk management considerations necessary to address these challenges while helping to protect the safety and well-being of academic travelers.

NAVIGATING COMPLEX RISK PROFILES

Academic travelers encompass a wide range of individuals, each with distinct risk profiles. Executives and faculty members frequently travel internationally for conferences, collaborations, and speaking engagements. While experienced in risk mitigation, they still require support to navigate unfamiliar environments safely. In contrast, undergraduates embarking on their first research trips may lack the experience to effectively anticipate and manage risks. Ph.D. students conducting fieldwork in remote or politically unstable regions face challenges that demand specialized risk management. Additionally, visiting scholars or researchers with unknown statuses present further complexities, as their backgrounds and vulnerabilities may not be immediately apparent.



Understanding these diverse profiles is essential for developing tailored risk management strategies. Risk thresholds within institutions can also vary based on policies, research type, and the risk tolerance of traveling constituents. Some institutions adopt conservative approaches with strict travel protocols, while others prioritize academic freedom, accepting higher risks in pursuit of progress. Similarly, the nature of research influences risk perceptions—fieldwork in conflict zones or disaster-prone areas inherently carries greater risks than laboratory-based research in controlled environments.



CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

ACADEMIC GROUPS WITH RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS FACE UNIQUE CHALLENGES, PARTICULARLY AROUND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES AND SECURITY CONCERNS IN CERTAIN REGIONS.

Travelers may be targeted due to their association with faith-based institutions, especially if their presence is perceived as proselytizing. As a result, risk management strategies must be flexible, tailored to the context and risk appetite of each institution. Engaging proactively with local contacts to align planned programs with the on-the-ground realities of potential threats is crucial.

The consequences of traveling with incorrect visas or documents can be severe, including deportation, travel bans, and legal liabilities. Academic travelers must adhere strictly to visa and immigration requirements to avoid disruptions. However, navigating complex visa regulations can be challenging, particularly for inexperienced travelers or those visiting countries with stringent entry requirements. Visa violations can also impact institutions, damaging reputations and raising legal concerns. Proactive visa assistance, thorough pre-departure training, and ongoing support are essential to mitigating these risks.

PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

To effectively address these challenges, academic institutions must adopt a comprehensive risk management

approach focusing on prevention, preparedness, and response. Pre-departure training is critical to inform travelers of potential risks, cultural sensitivities, and emergency protocols, including visa and immigration requirements, health and safety procedures, and geopolitical considerations. Establishing clear communication channels and emergency response protocols is essential for providing timely support during crises.

Collaboration with travel risk management experts, insurance providers, and local partners is key to creating tailored risk mitigation plans. Leveraging technology and data analytics can further enhance risk management efforts. Tools such as travel tracking platforms, mobile apps, and geospatial intelligence provide real-time insights into traveler locations, security threats, and evacuation routes, enabling proactive risk monitoring and response. Additionally, data-driven assessments help identify trends and vulnerabilities, supporting targeted interventions and efficient resource allocation. By integrating technology, academic institutions can strengthen their risk management strategies and better safeguard traveler well-being.

In conclusion, effectively addressing the diverse risk management needs of academic groups requires a deep understanding of their unique profiles, risk thresholds, and challenges. From faculty and executives to undergraduates and Ph.D. students, each traveler has distinct vulnerabilities that must be proactively considered. Additionally, differing institutional risk tolerances, along with the nature of research and potential religious affiliations, further complicate the risk landscape. By implementing a comprehensive, tailored approach to risk identification and mitigation, academic institutions can safeguard their global endeavors, ensuring the safety and success of their missions while fostering innovation and academic excellence.

TRAVEL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR C-SUITE BUSINESS PERSONNEL

Depending on the industry and type of organization, C-Suite personnel can face unique risks, ranging from opportunistic crime to targeted threats, such as cyber-attacks or kidnap-for-ransom, especially when traveling for business. These individuals can be even more susceptible to varied security threats; and as such, proactive security measures are paramount to keeping this traveler demographic safe and supported. With these risk factors in mind, On Call's Security Team weighs in on how C-Suite individuals can successfully reduce their travel risk exposure.

PRE-TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

Before any high-profile individual embarks on a trip, it is crucial to pre-emptively assess potential risks. Organizations can identify vulnerabilities specific to the travel destination by conducting a comprehensive risk assessment with their travelers. If your organization does not work with a firm like On Call who can perform these assessments for you, some key factors to consider include:

- Understanding the unique risk profile and tolerance of the respective travelers and assess how these align in conjunction to the local health, security, and political environments.
- Acquiring credible advice for avoiding high-risk areas for meetings or lodging.
- Ensuring accommodations are properly vetted and appropriate for personnel needs.
- Developing an emergency response plan, including designated safe zones,



applicable resources, and contact points.

- Making digital and physical copies of essential documents, like passports, and ID's – in the event they are lost or stolen.
- Considering additional insurance coverage for unexpected events that can impact C-suite personnel: including kidnap & ransom, extortion, and detentions.
- Scheduling secure transportation arrangements and providing vetted accommodations/providers.

IN-TRANSIT SECURITY MEASURES

Traveling itself presents an array of security challenges for C-Suite travelers. Effective in-transit security measures for these individuals include:

- Avoiding solo travel whenever possible.
- Ensuring situational awareness by staying alert to surroundings.
- Safeguarding personal belongings to avoid theft or tampering. For valuables, we recommend discreet solutions such as money belts or secure inside pockets.
- Limiting sharing of travel plans/itineraries and sensitive information to only need to know contacts.

- Having digital and physical copies of essential documents, like passports, and ID’s – in the event they are lost or stolen.
- Establishing and utilizing communication windows to ensure team members are updated and any changes to plans are known.
- Using only pre-vetted transportation services to reduce the risk of incidents.

POST-TRAVEL SECURITY MEASURES

Evaluating the journey allows for refining future strategies and ensuring continued enhanced security for future trips. Key steps to take post-travel include:

- Reviewing travel-related expenses for suspicious activity.
- Safely disposing of travel documents to protect personal information.

- Changing any passwords that could have been exposed during the trip.
- Conducting debriefs with executive protection detail or security team members to assess overall trip success as well as potential enhancements.

In conclusion, ensuring the safety and security of C-suite business personnel during travel requires a comprehensive, proactive approach at every stage of the journey. By addressing pre-travel risks, implementing effective in-transit security measures, and reviewing post-travel outcomes, organizations can significantly mitigate potential threats. These practices not only protect high-profile executives but also safeguard the reputation and operational continuity of the organization as a whole. With careful planning, coordination, and ongoing evaluation, companies can confidently manage travel security risks and ensure the well-being of their most critical personnel.



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