

# Welcome Security Brief of Colombia

Updated July 2019

## Information about Republic of Colombia:

	<b>Capital</b>	Bogotá 4° 39´ N 74° 3´ O
	<b>Official Language</b>	Spanish
	<b>Demonym</b>	Colombian
	<b>Form of Government</b>	Presidential Republic
	<b>President</b>	Ivan Duque Márquez
	<b>Vicepresident</b>	Marta Lucía Ramírez
	<b>Total population</b>	48,202,617 (2015)
	<b>Density</b>	41 inhabitants/km <sup>2</sup>
	<b>Currency</b>	Colombian peso (\$) (COP) 1 USD = \$2.904.60 aprox. 1 Euro \$3.471.00 aprox.
	<b>Time Zone</b>	UTC-5
	<b>ISO CODE</b>	170 / COL / CO
	<b>Dominio Internet</b>	.co
	<b>Telephone prefix</b>	+57
<b>Empresas de Telefonía Celular</b>	Claro, Movistar, Tigo, Avantel, Uff Móvil, UNE, ETB, Grupo Éxito and Virgin Mobile	

## Phases

The Federation operates a four colours phase system to distinguish the security situation.		
<b>White phase</b>	Situation normal	No major security concerns
<b>Yellow phase</b>	Situation of heightened tension	Some security concerns, heightened security awareness initiated
<b>Orange phase</b>	Emergency situation	Access to beneficiaries limited, risk to RCRC personnel severe, tight security management needed
<b>Red phase</b>	Relocation or hibernation	Conditions do not allow work, risk to RCRC personnel extreme

All RC Personnel must know the current security phase classification and it's implication on the way of working and living in their area of operation or on the area that will be visited.

Colombia is Currently in a **YELLOW** Security Phase. Please be advised that this security phase can change at any time. In addition, certain regions or areas may warrant a separate security briefing as well as measures.

Colombia is the fourth largest nation in South America, with around 46 million inhabitants, the third in population in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico. Colombia is known worldwide for the production of soft coffee, flowers, emeralds, charcoal and oil, its cultural diversity and for being the second richest country in biodiversity in the world. It is the fourth economic center of Spanish-speaking America. According to the 1991 Constitution, Colombia is composed of 32 departments and a single Capital District (Bogotá).

**Office Address:**

The IFRC Country office is located within the Colombian Red Cross Headquarters Office in Bogota. The address is: Sede Nacional Cruz Roja Colombiana, Avenida Carrera. 68 # 68 B - 31, Bogotá, Colombia

**Office Working Hours are:**

Monday to Friday 0800 – 1700 HRS.

Weekends and Holidays open as necessary / dependent on current operations, disasters and crisis.

**Currency and forms of payment:** The official currency of Colombia is the peso (\$), issued by the Bank of the Republic. The bills that are issued can be \$1,000, \$2,000, \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000 and \$50,000, and the coins that circulate are \$50, \$100, \$200 and \$500. The entry and exit of money, in this currency or any other, are limited and must be declared on arrival or departure from the country.

The exchange of foreign currency must be made exclusively in exchange centers in airports, hotels and banks, never in the street. The exchange rate fluctuates from day to day and has the US dollar as its official reference (very approximately 1 USD = between 2,800 COP and 3,000 COP).

Most hotels, restaurants and commercial establishments receive international credit cards. The most frequent are Visa and MasterCard. Only some sites accept American Express and Diners Club.

**Tips:** The custom is to leave a 10% in expensive restaurant, which may be accepted, rejected or modified by you, according to your rating of the service provided. Tip is not mandatory.

**Places of interest:** Before making visits to specific areas of the national territory, it is necessary to know the conditions of safe access according to the contexts of armed conflict and post-conflict and other situations of violence (urban violence), taking into account security recommendations aimed at reducing risks and ensuring protection.

**Air transport:** The El Dorado International Airport in the city of Bogotá is the most important airport infrastructure in the country and is one of the busiest hubs in Latin America. Medellín, Cali and Cartagena de Indias are also international airports. Colombia has an extensive national airport network.

Air transportation is the most recommended due to long distances, road conditions and public order.

**Health:** In Bogota, due to its altitude (over 2500 metres above sea level), the most frequent affections are the Acute Mountain Sickness (MAM). It is recommended an adaptation period of two days and the soft ingestion of food, as well as good hydration.

The country is endemic in certain areas where it is advisable to protect against malaria, yellow fever, dengue, chikungunya or ZIKA. To travel to certain regions of the country is required to

have been vaccinated against yellow fever at least 15 days before the start of travel. It is also recommended the tetanus vaccine and vaccines for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid fevers, Triple Virus and diphtheria-tetanus.

It is especially recommended to bring the medicines formulated if you have health difficulties, in this case it is important to inform the Colombian Red Cross or the IFRC Country Office.

The Office in Bogota has a PEP kit that is located at the Colombia Office Country Representative's Office. This kit will be used as requested / necessary. Proper chain of custody and protocols of administration will be strictly adhered to.

The Office in Bogota has a fully stocked First Aid Kit it that is located next to the Colombia Office Country Representative's Office.

**Adequate Clothing:** The predominant climate in the city of Bogota is cool, with great oscillation day/night (5 degrees/20degrees).

The country has a high mountain, coastal and jungle climate. It is convenient to be well informed of the zone to visit to take the suitable clothes.

Colombia is very formal in its way of dressing in the workplace and protocol acts. Important consider this in your suitcase.

## **Materials and Elements**

Take responsibility and take care of your personal belongings and especially:

- Laptops or Tablets
- Video or photographic cameras
- Cellular
- USB Flash Drives
- Luggage
- Wallets
- Credit Cards

## **Current Security Situation in Colombia**

### ***(a) Threats from conflict or post-conflict***

Currently, in accordance with the directives of the Ministry of Defence, organized armed groups (GAO) that are parties to the internal conflict and organized criminal groups (GDO) at the service of drug trafficking are present in Colombia. Among the organized armed groups are the ELN, the residual structures or dissidences of the former FARC-EP, the AGC or Gulf Clan, Los Puntilleros, Los Pelusos (EPL) and Los Caparrapos. Among the organized criminal groups are La Oficina, Los Pachenchas, Los Pachelly and La Constru, which maintain territorial control especially in populated centers and some drug trafficking routes generating humanitarian consequences such as:

- confinement
- displacement of the civilian population
- massacres and targeted killings of community leaders, ex-guerrilla members and civilians
- persons deprived of liberty,
- forced disappearances and
- victims of minefields and improvised explosive devices.

Drug trafficking is the main economic source of support for armed groups, which guard crops, laboratories and trafficking routes. The drug trafficking chain and its fragmentation generates

struggles for control among groups involving the population. On the other hand, the substitution and eradication policies developed by the State also constitute a source of confrontation.

An undetermined percentage of the national territory has a permanent and transitory presence of these armed groups. Their dynamics are concentrated, with different intensity and presentation, in regions such as:

- ✓ Pacífico (Chocó, Valle, Cauca and Nariño)
- ✓ Southwest (Caquetá, Huila y Putumayo)
- ✓ South of the meta
- ✓ South of Tolima
- ✓ South of Cordoba
- ✓ Urabá Antioqueño and Cordobés
- ✓ Antioqueño northeast
- ✓ Lower Cauca Antioqueño
- ✓ Catatumbo (North of Santander)
- ✓ Arauca, Casanare and Boyacá

#### ***(b) Threats from urban violence and common crime***

In the country's main cities such as Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Cartagena and Barranquilla, there is a context of urban violence, focused and not generalized, characterized by the presence of combos and gangs, especially dedicated to microtrafficking, which maintain territorial dominance across invisible borders and maintain an armed confrontation in case of territorial transgressions or competition in the sale of hallucinogens and other substances, where threats and attacks are very frequent, leaving direct and indirect victims (stray bullets) who are mostly minors.

In some sectors of Bogotá, such as Suba, Kennedy, and Ciudad Bolívar, there is a risk factor due to urban violence characterized by the permanent presence of gangs.

Common crime focuses especially in suburban sectors, within which there is a zoning, according to the level of risk. For this reason, preventive security measures should be implemented during transit through these zones with time restrictions (daytime only) and territory restrictions (up to certain places).

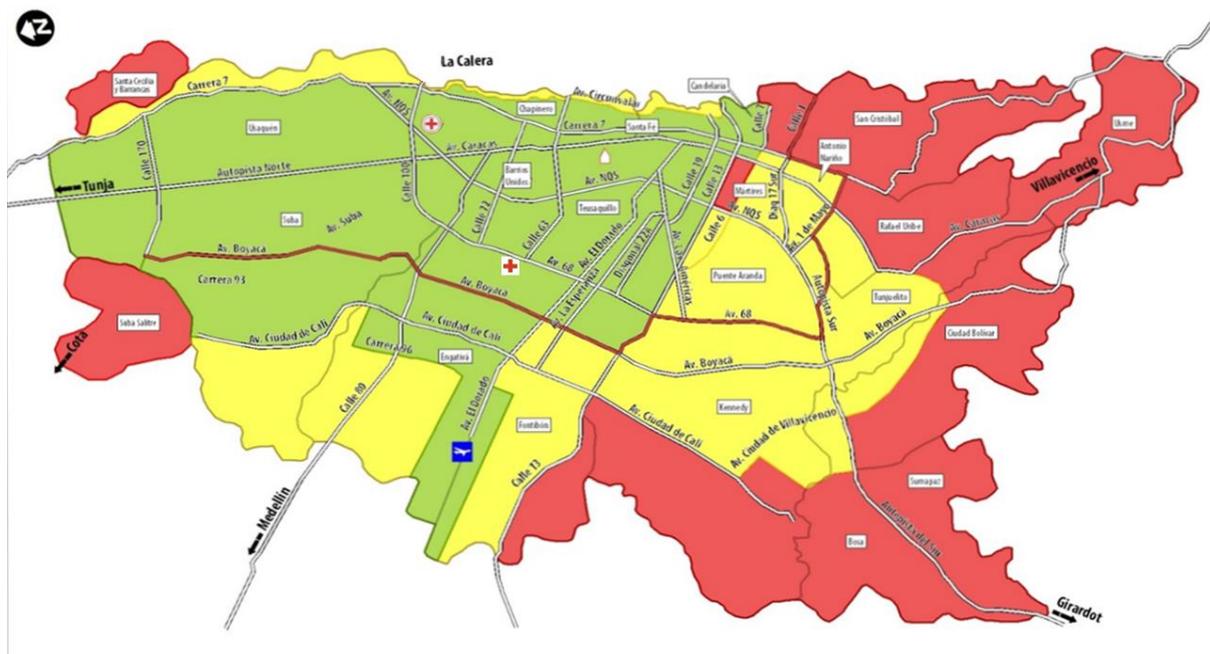
On the other hand, there are several types of crime, such as the "paseo millonario" that is carried out especially in Taxis and where the victim is kidnapped while being taken to ATMs to obtain all the available money from the victim.

There is also a mode of "fleteo" that consists of criminals who generally move around on motorcycles (driver and barbecue) or in private vehicles identify, follow and approach people who carry out large cash transactions at ATMs or directly after they leave the banks. Threatening them with firearms they take away their cash and in case of resistance they murder or leave the victim badly wounded. There have been cases in which they follow the victim to his place of residence and even enter the house and take advantage of it to steal appliances, jewellery and other goods.

Another form of fraud is presented using electronic devices in the ATMs of banks, where a person swipes his debit or credit card and the criminals are copying the magnetic stripe with all the information of the user, to then make transactions and steal their money.

Another form of extortion is carried out by organized crime that specializes in locating people with a high economic level (merchants, businessmen, farmers, etc.) and through kidnapping or threats obtain large sums of money.

Finally, there is a modality known as street robbery in which criminals armed generally with sharp short weapons place their victims in isolated or unprotected areas and steal cell phones, wallets and jewellery.



**c) Threats by Natural Phenomena and Technological Events:**

Bogota is located in an area of high risk for seismicity, which is why in case of a possible tectonic movement during the stay should be applied preventive evacuation measures provided in place. These measures will also be taken into account in case of technological events such as structural fire or collapse of structures.

There are main road arteries connecting the south with the north of the city and the west with the east. Within these main roads of Bogota there are highways with permanent vehicular flow, where the risk of accident is high, which is why they must meet the traffic rules.

#### ***d) Protection and Security Measures:***

##### ***Prevention of threats on public roads***

- The best recommendation is to always be aware. Prevention will reduce the possibility of becoming a victim of any criminal. In this sense, always keep in mind:
- Avoid carrying valuables (jewelry, cell phones) or large sums of money.
- Avoid walking the streets with laptops, cameras or similar.
- Be aware of what is happening around you.
- Avoid areas known for being problematic or dangerous.
- If you can avoid it, do not make prolonged transfers on foot.
- Avoid talking on a cell phone while walking on the street.
- Avoid the use of public transportation.
- If you become a victim, remember not to offer resistance and acting calmly is the safest way to behave.

##### ***Buying***

Be careful when making purchases, when you are storing them in your vehicle if someone comes to help you with this task, kindly refuse the offer and as soon as your purchases are inside the vehicle, secure the doors and close all the windows to start driving.

If you plan to shop in traditional markets, carry only the money with you and a copy of your passport.

Remember that public markets can be dangerous. Avoid going to them alone. Select a safe place to park your vehicle.

##### ***In case of fire***

- Remain calm and try to comfort family members or co-workers.
- Cut off power and gas supplies.
- Do not open doors or windows, because with the air the fire spreads. If the fire spreads, call the fire department and follow their instructions.
- In case of evacuation, do not run, do not shout, do not push. Don't waste time looking for personal items.
- If there are gases and smoke, move on your knees (crawling) and if possible cover your nose and mouth with a damp cloth.
- Do not use elevators.

- If your clothes catch fire, do not run; drop to the floor and roll slowly, if necessary cover yourself with a blanket to extinguish the fire.
- Once outside, stay as far away from the building as possible so as not to obstruct the work of the rescue corps.

***In case of earthquake.***

During

- During an earthquake you will experience an earth movement that will start softly and then increase.
- You will hear a deafening noise to which will be added the noise produced by objects when they fall as well as the numerous alarms that will be activated. Be prepared.
- Stay calm.
- If you are indoors, seek shelter under the master columns, next to the columns of the building, under a table or desk away from windows or glass doors, until the earthquake has passed.
- If you are outdoors, stay away from buildings, trees, and power lines.
- If you are on the road, go to a place away from bridges, elevated tracks, and try to park and stay inside the vehicle.
- Do not use elevators, you may get caught in them.

Then

- After the main earthquake, seismic motion are likely to continue and weakened buildings will fall. Be alert and stay away from landslides.
- If trapped, use a visible or audible signal to draw attention.
- Inspect the area, locate water and gas leaks, and disconnect damaged utilities.
- Locate black water leaks and downed lines.
- Locate structural faults that could cause possible damage in later movements.
- Clean up spills of hazardous substances.
- Tune in your radio to the operating frequency of the Red Cross System so you can receive instructions for future action.
- If you must use ladders, be sure they will resist weight and movement.
- Do not flush toilets, sewage pipes may be in poor condition.
- Do not drink tap water.
- On the shore, just after the first tremor, evacuate neatly and quickly to a high place away from the shore.
- After the earthquake there may be a tsunami..

***Mobility***

- It is forbidden to use massive public transport (buses, Transmilenio and taxis not requested by the Hotel).
- The use of established legal taxi companies (radiotaxis) is mandatory. In Bogotá, and the other cities it will be through legally constituted companies), unless it is in an airport or commercial center where the taxis that exist for this purpose and that are subject to control by the establishment can be taken.
- Uber and Cabify as well as Tappsi are available in most of the country. Their use is recommended.
- Emblematic vehicles, outside operations, shall be used in a discreet and restrictive manner, respecting local driving laws and customs and bearing in mind at all times that they are carrying the emblem and, therefore, representing the Movement. Crimes committed at the wheel due to accidents caused by reckless driving or driving under

the influence of alcohol as well as being prosecuted through criminal proceedings could lead to expulsion from the country.

- With some exceptions, it is strictly forbidden to transport people who do not belong to the Movement or who are not relatives of the delegates.

### ***Day and night journeys in the city of residence or visit***

- In Bogotá, restrictions on access to localities and night work will be complied with in accordance with the security analysis carried out by the Red Cross. Where there is no Red Cross presence (CRC, IFRC, ICRC), the CRC Permanent Security Committee will indicate the restrictions and the mode, time and place measures to be taken to minimize risks.
- It is not advisable to walk at night, except for short distances and in known and transited areas. In this case, whenever possible, it is advisable to do it in groups or in the company of another person, avoiding being alone as much as possible.
- In principle, travel in Red Cross vehicles, or in taxis with reference, in any case, the ICRC radio or CITELE will be informed as usual of the trip, the place of stay (with fixed contact number), the persons in the vehicle, the vehicle, the next contact, the day of return and any information of interest.

### ***Individual behaviour:***

- Be discreet and do not draw attention to yourself with your attitude.
- Avoid outward signs of wealth.
- Respect Colombian law, customs and traditions.
- Respect the "Code of Ethical Behavior".
- It is strictly forbidden to carry or consume drugs.
- Not to carry elements with the emblem of the Red Cross for personal activities.

### ***Advices***

- Beware of muggings by civilians who identify themselves as police or any national authority, even if they are in uniform.
- Avoid withdrawing large amounts of money - more than 1'000'000 COP - from banks, it is better to do so in small amounts, even if more frequently. Preferably use ATMs in shopping centres, avoiding those that are alone or without an audience around them.
- Always have some money to satisfy the thief, as it is more dangerous when the offender gets nothing from the victim and decides to harm him or her.
- Go out with someone, especially at night, or at least let someone know where you are going out and with whom.
- In order to avoid the "paseo millonario" or millionaire ride, do not take taxis on the street and call one of the radio-taxis telephones, waiting for the license plate number and confirm it when the taxi arrives.
- Be aware of the risk of being intoxicated with scopolamine, especially in taxis or bars at night by attractive women.
- If you are a victim, do not resist, cooperate and, as soon as possible, report it to the IFRC Office.

### ***Medical care***

- Given the quality of the hospital infrastructure, diversity of medicines and medical care it is not necessary to take particular measures in relation to health.
- Colombia is very varied from the climatic point of view and the precautions to take can vary depending on the place where the work is carried out -risk of malaria and dengue.
- To travel to the country, you must have your vaccination card updated according to the recommendations for Colombia. In case of doubt, the health departments of both institutions can advise you.

- The Sectional and sub-delegations and offices have a list of hospitals and doctors where you can go in the field. In case of insufficient provision in the field, the expatriate must come to Bogota where there are all the medical services for any consultation (Clínica del Country in Race 16 # 82-57 or Foundation Santa Fe Clinic in Street 116 # 9 -02).
- In case of a serious emergency medical problem, you can contact the heads of the medical departments of either of the two institutions in the field or in Bogota.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Central Information and Telecommunications Centre (CITEL)**

National Relief

Colombian Red Cross

Telephone: 4376317 y 4376369

Cellular.: 310 2602323 - 310 2199098

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### Other Emergency Telephones:

Colombian Red Cross: PBX 4376300

National Police : 112