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Mar 15, 2017 by **Cari E. Guittard**

## **Corporate Diplomacy 101 for Global Road Warriors** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **What Every Corporate Diplomat Should Do Prior To & When Entering a New Country**

This week a family member was traveling to Dubai for the first time on a work trip, the last in a long series of international stops. She is a seasoned global traveler, kick ass compliance attorney and all around fierce corporate diplomat. Her job requires her to have uncomfortable conversations with those whom she is investigating and this trip was no different. I didn't have a chance to check in with her before her arrival and I honestly thought she would be fine as I have been in Dubai countless times. Dubai is one of those cities where I feel more secure there than in many major U.S. cities. Their security apparatus, especially in public spaces, is ubiquitous. There are cameras and security personnel literally everywhere. And as a western female, with long blonde hair no less, I have never felt threatened or even the hint of a security issue traveling to and from Dubai or throughout the UAE by myself. On this particular

trip though my sister-in-law found herself accosted in her office by a man she was investigating. He literally tackled her to the ground and two of her co-workers had to wrestle him off of her. Naturally, she was shell-shocked, bruised and completely at a loss as to what to do next. When I heard what had transpired, I immediately advised that she call our local Consulate, ask for the Regional Security Officer or Diplomatic Security (DS) agent as well as the officer on duty and knew they would advise her from there on next steps, which they did. DS reached out to the UAE police and helped coordinate the safe return to her hotel and would have helped expedite her travel out of the country should further involvement have been necessary.

This experience is a cautionary tale and one that reminded me how important it is for any of us in the private sector who are travelling abroad to take some basic security measures before and upon arrival. The following is a simple security check list that I devised in part from my time working in Diplomatic Security at the U.S. Department of State and in part from a global career going in and out of several high threat countries, and high threat situations. I advise every client and colleague to invest the time to do this for every trip, every time. Especially in times like these where even the seemingly most secure of global cities has fallen victim to episodes of civil unrest or terrorist attacks — it is always good practice to be prepared, be briefed and be aware.

### **The Global Road Warrior Essential Five — Key Questions & Steps to Take Before You Depart & Upon Arrival**

#### **1) Is there a U.S. Embassy, Consulate, or Diplomatic Mission in the city you are traveling to?**

We have representation in almost every major country and city around the world. Find any US post at: <https://www.usembassy.gov/>

#### **2) Does your job and/or the country you are traveling to have any sensitivities and/or security concerns?**

If you have any security concerns, look up the Diplomatic Security office within our missions which can typically be found on the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website or look for the general number for the mission so you have it on hand when you arrive and in case of emergencies. If you aren't sure whether there are security concerns it is always a good practice to check State's Travel Warning page and the CIA World Factbook to see if recent alerts have been issued. I also subscribe to and regularly check in on The Global Incident Map which has real time listings of every major security issue and threat imaginable happening globally.

If there are any security concerns, I would request well in advance of travel a briefing upon arrival by one of the Diplomatic Security agents posted in country. I do this nearly every time I travel to a country with a security concern as they always have excellent insights on places to avoid, people to be concerned about if my work is of a sensitive nature, and give me a heads up about local/regional security threats. The head DS agent in charge is the Regional Security Officer (RSO) and they are well connected to all local law enforcement and military. They are some of the finest law enforcement professionals I have ever worked with and they are a wealth of knowledge on local and regional security concerns and threats.

It is also good practice to connect in advance with the Senior Commercial Officer posted in country. They are technically part of the U.S. Commerce Department, however they are posted to our Embassies and Consulates, and report to our Ambassador in country. They represent U.S. business interests abroad by promoting trade and working with U.S. companies in every region so they as well are a wealth of knowledge locally as well and an excellent point of contact. If you can't get a briefing by the RSO, request one with the SCO upon arrival so you have someone who is a direct point of contact at the Embassy or Consulate.

### **3) Make a Commitment to Increase Your Situational Awareness.**

Situational awareness is essential for personal safety anywhere but especially when you are traveling to a new environment. When you are in any new environment, even if you travel there frequently, it is always good practice to unplug from your devices the first few hours to authentically observe your environment. We can't take in what is around us and build good situational awareness if we are zoned out on our phones or devices. If we take the time to observe our surroundings — and if we do this repeatedly and at least a few times every day — our natural threat detection warning systems will alert us when something seems or feels off. I commit to keeping my devices off for a few hours and at least until I am in my hotel so I can observe and absorb all that is around me. I also love all the practical advice in former Navy SEAL Clint Emerson's 100 Deadly Skills: The SEAL Operative's Guide to Eluding Pursuers, Evading Capture, and Surviving Any Dangerous Situation. I have given so many copies of this I've lost count.

### **4) Get Temporary Travel Insurance — for Every Trip Abroad, Every Time.**

It's not expensive but completely worth it. This is basic must do though I am constantly amazed at how few actually do it. There are a number of reputable companies and if you have any existing health issues I would also opt for travel medical insurance as well as AD&D insurance coverage. Go to <http://www.travelinsurancereview.net/> to compare companies and rates.

### **5) Make sure you have photo copies of your passport — one in your possession and one at home on file with your company or with a loved one.**

Should you lose your passport, this will help expedite the issuing of another one. Having a point of contact in advance at the Embassy or Consulate as well will help expedite re-issue and trust me, this will save you time and serious headaches in the long term should you ever lose or misplace your passport while abroad.

### **Be Prepared, Get Briefed & Be Aware Every Trip, Every Time**

Those who serve in our Embassies and Consulates — from the RSOs, CSOs and Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) — are a wealth of local knowledge, oftentimes speak the local language and have deep experience working with local cultures. They also have excellent situational awareness and a deep sense of what's happening on the ground as they are posted in country for 2-3 year terms on average. For corporate diplomats this invaluable insight as we typically go into a country for only a few hours or days at a time and it can be difficult to get a good read on the local environment let alone the security situation. I am amazed how often they are discounted or not even thought of as a resource by the private

sector. Taking these extra steps and committing the time to reach out and make a connection with our missions will make all the difference should an emergency or security concern arise. The reality is that unforeseen emergencies do arise all the time and having an actual point of contact at our Embassies, Consulates and Diplomatic Missions is Corporate Diplomacy 101 for all you global road warriors.

***Note from the CPD Blog Manager:*** *This article originally appeared at the [Huffington Post](#).*

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