

## **PANAMA VICTIMS OF CRIME REPORTING**

The U.S. Embassy is aware of a perceived increase in crime against foreigners in various areas of Panama. In addition to urging the U.S. community to take all necessary precautions to avoid becoming a victim of crime, the Embassy encourages U.S. residents and visitors to Panama to immediately report crimes to the police.

Below is a brief outline on how to report a crime in Panama:

1. Police – Initial Response
  - a. The police response in Panama is different than in the United States. The police will respond to provide immediate assistance and protection to victims, will arrest suspects if they are still on the scene or nearby (assuming they have probable cause that the suspect indeed committed a crime) and, if necessary, call for DIJ investigators (see more about DIJ below). The Police will NOT take a report or conduct follow-up investigation. They may take some data for statistical purposes, but they are not empowered to file reports or conduct investigations. If your call to the police is not timely (i.e. when the crime is discovered) there is little the police can do. If you delay in reporting the crime, or if it is minor, you should go straight to DIJ.
2. DIJ (Dirección de Investigación Judicial/Department of Judicial Investigation)
  - a. DIJ is the bridge between the initial police response and the investigation for prosecution of a crime. They are actually an arm of the Fiscalía (Attorney General's Office).
  - b. If DIJ responds to the scene of a crime, they will conduct an initial investigation, however, they cannot conduct a full investigation or a follow-up investigation unless you go to the local Denuncia Center and file an official report. Filing a Denuncia is the ONLY way to open a case and get a case tracking number. Once you have filed a Denuncia and obtained a Denuncia number, you can use that number to follow up on the status of your case.
3. Fiscalía (Attorney General's Office)
  - a. Matters are taken up with the Fiscalía once the DIJ investigation has begun.
  - b. During this step of the crime reporting process, you will need a lawyer or a public defendant to represent your case
  - c. On average, it takes 2 to 4 months to investigate a case, prosecution can take years.

In addition to reporting crime to Panamanian authorities, U.S. citizens are encouraged to provide information on criminal incidents to the U.S. Embassy. This information will assist the Embassy in tracking crimes against U.S. citizens in Panama and to follow up with authorities.

When reporting a crime to American Citizen Services unit of the Consular Section, please provide the following information by email to [panama-acs@state.gov](mailto:panama-acs@state.gov) or by visiting our website and clicking on the crime report link which will be on the website shortly:

- U.S. Passport Number of victim
- DIJ Report Number and Date Filed
- Type of Crime Committed
- In-depth narrative of the crime you were victim of including the following information:
  - a. Location of crime (province, city/area, neighborhood, etc.)

- b. Number of US Citizens affected
  - c. Date and approximate time of day the crime took place
  - d. Monetary amount of valuables/objects taken/destroyed (if applicable)
  - e. Action taken after crime was committed (police report, etc.)
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