



Special Message from:

Operation Serve International

Updated: February 1, 2017

MEXICO TRAVEL ALERT

The U.S. State Department periodically issues travel advisories alerting tourists of the dangers in Mexico. In response to calls our office receives from potential volunteers concerned about safety while traveling with Operation Serve, we have issued this “**Travel Release**” to address their concerns regarding these advisories.

The State Department Advisory stated that “the greatest increase in violence has occurred near the U.S. border,” **almost ONE THOUSAND MILES** to the north of Mexico City, where we minister. Mexico border cities of Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Monterrey and Matamoros have been plagued with violence all related to the drug cartels and the crackdown against them. These reports are documented evidence of the dangers in traveling in these regions. Any interaction with any known drug cartels along these border towns places anyone in grave danger. The State department reports resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime reported in the border region and in areas along major drug trafficking routes. Although, some of the media reports are from a “News Desk in Mexico City,” many of these reported events are occurring hundreds to thousands of miles away from the City Centre. It is a common occurrence to hear news stating “near” Mexico City and upon research you will find that the city or state and the location is hours away by car. **The geographical distance from these locations along the border is comparing our Ohio Headquarters to a location in Florida we are far removed from these specific cities and locations of violence.**

*All these events occur in locations that **Operation Serve teams do not travel to, nor would a team member travel alone or without national leadership and guidance for any reason in Mexico.*** Note in the beginning of the State Department report it states that **millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year.** Mexico City is like any other mega city, there are ongoing challenges in the city that is plagued with crime that has escalated based on the money crisis in the country of Mexico. We have a well trained staff and complete national team that secures the safety of each and every team member while traveling with us throughout Mexico City.

We are committed to protecting our teams while offering quality ministry to the poor and hurting. All of our team activities are tightly secured and structured. ***We use private buses for transportation. The drivers have served with us for more than 25 years.*** Dr. Sameh and Connie Sadik have served with Operation Serve for over 30 years and Connie personally lived in Mexico City for more than 7 years. Rosi Cortina, our Field Director, has been with OSI for over 30 years. Rosi and the national staff are with the teams at all times. **We have utilized the same Hotel for over 20 years in Mexico City.** We have hosted more than 5,000 people in Mexico City with the assistance of our Mexican national staff and never had any security or safety issues.

Since 1991, Operation Serve has been in regular communication with the State Department in Washington for their travel advisories, as well as the U.S. Embassy and the offices of the local delegations in Mexico City. Weekly, we communicate with the Center of Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia (a world health organization) for any health risks and immunization recommendations for the countries we serve in. *Be assured that one of our utmost concerns is the safety and health of our team.* Our ministry has canceled previous team dates based on dangers that were valid concerns for our teams.

We have provided this “travel alert” to assure you that your personal safety and health in all the countries we serve in is very important to us. Disease control information, high crime waves in Mexico City, potential political problems, extremist activity and overall unrest in countries like Mexico and Egypt are issues our ministry regularly investigates in order to protect your health, welfare and safety. *Hundreds of individuals return annually with our ministry to the field and one of the greatest compliments we hear is that they had a wonderful ministry experience and were thoroughly impressed by the commitment to excellence and security of the team.*

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