

Your hotel, lodging or base camp:

Hotels:

1. If you're thinking ahead then you've already got your rooms reserved and your travelers already divided up.
2. You've done your emergency planning and link up protocols and your cell phones all work in country.
3. Your people should be trained on basic hotel security procedures to include:

Walking to all the exits on your floor and make sure you can find them.

Keeping room doors completely locked at all times.

Put the Do Not Disturb; sign on the room to limit people coming and going. (Thieves will just knock first to see if anybody is in there.)

Don't throw away any paperwork with information on it, as somebody always will look at it.

Save your trash for the last day, this limits battlefield intelligence efforts where people build profiles of travelers based on the trash they leave behind.

Gear left behind equals novice travelers and poor leadership, which equals an easy target.

Candy and soda pop equal young people which are also an easy target.

There are an estimated 3,700 hotel fires each year in the United States, imagine how many there are in foreign countries with little or no fire protection standards?

If you are in a foreign country, EXPECT your phone calls to be monitored. Because they are! You can deny it all you want, but they are. Your email and website traffic, passwords are also monitored and captured too. Intelligence agencies have been doing this for years, yeah seriously. Read Peter Wright's Spy Catcher, it's the best book ever written on intelligence gathering and it's all true. (Score one for the Russians, they still own England out right and still do, oh wait, they had spy teams in America too....yikes!!!)

1. Team up your travelers for safety.
2. Have designated check in times with each of them. Twice a day if you're not in contact with them daily.
3. Talk to the home owner every few days just to make sure everything is good on both sides of the fence.

4. If you've thought ahead you've got contingency plans in case travelers and home owners don't work out.

Base Camp Life:

1. Base camps have rules, in processing procedures, etc... Follow the rules and it will make your transition smoother.
2. Base camps have limited water, food, medical care, etc... So make sure your travelers are briefed up beforehand.
3. If the camp has a 2 minute shower rule, then have your travelers practice taking 2 minute showers, otherwise you will have a leadership situation involving a bunch of angry people.
3. As a goodwill gesture, be talking to the base camp leadership and find out what they need from the U.S. and bring it with you. The items can be dispersed among the travelers if necessary.
4. Food can be rough, so bring protein bars, snacks and anything else to ease your hunger pains. Powered drinks to mix with water are like gold and they keep you drinking liquids.
5. Mosquito nets, air mattresses, pillows are all great to have, small portable fans can be a life saver, you just need room to pack them in. Most of the time you can leave them behind for the next travelers.

Traveling to worksites or other locations:

1. Anytime the travelers leave their lodging they are at risk for being kidnapped or killed. So vary the times your travelers depart and arrive.
2. In some regions armed guards can be used to escort the travelers all it takes is prior arrangements, proper vetting of the company or group and money. Normally countries don't let foreigners bring in weapons so you need to plan ahead.

Private military and private security:

Nowadays there are many different military and security groups operating globally, the job for your organization is to make sure the guys on the ground are actually trained professionals and not amateurs. Ask about their schooling levels, experience levels, English speaking ability, communications with their higher headquarters, types of weapons they carry, vehicle support and rescue and recovery procedures. If you go cheap the people protecting you could also be your kidnappers.

Global companies may not have a large footprint in some countries, but they normally have a Global Response Group that can be flown into to assist in getting you back out.

Kidnap and Ransom Insurance is a must for some countries and is highly recommended. The insurance companies have professionals that come in and take charge of the negotiating and exchange process.

Quick Reminders: Law enforcement in many countries can be too busy, corrupt or have competing priorities as it is so be forewarned. An insurance company only wants the hostages back and this streamlines the process while minimizing the operational footprint for the release. Leave it to the real professionals and not the amateurs in your organization.

3. Operational security at the organization is a must in these situations as everybody likes to be informed, but what if someone is leaking information to the media or to the bad guys, it happens all the time, so control the flow of information to only those with a need to know and punish leaker's immediately or at least feed them disinformation that discredits them, then deal with them later.

4. Operational security is letting only those with an actual need to know, know enough to get their part of the operation done.

Once at the work site or destination:

Continue to use the buddy system and vary your schedule and routes. The goal is to make the bad guys look for an easier target.

Establish a check in and check out time so you know when you have travelers arriving and departing from their different locations.

This helps you track their progress and gives you a starting point if they fail to show up where they are supposed to be.

Your worst case scenario is several people are missing for several hours and you do nothing and then the rest of the group is compromised and captured.

Departing your hotel or lodging: Lessons Learned the Hard Way!

1. The two times when a group's operational security is at its lowest is when the group arrives at a new location and when they leave a location.
2. Both are a combination of lack of focus, exhaustion (travel or mission) and environmental considerations like sustained injuries, illnesses, equipment breakdown or losses.
3. Physical conditioning is vital to mission success.
4. Leader have to focus on personal and equipment (checklists really help!)
5. Medical support built into the team configuration is paramount to the groups success.

6. Backup equipment can be a lifesaver!
7. Leadership needs to enforce sleep plans and rest cycles to keep their people fresh, alert and situationally aware.
8. No alcohol or drugs, wait until you get home!
9. Throwing away sensitive items does not mean they are automatically destroyed, in fact it normally means you've just gave away all your important documents to anybody that wants them.

Bottom Line: Travel is hard on people and equipment.

Getting to the airport or operational security in motion:

1. Normally a large group comes down, mills around in the lobby while the bills are being paid and all leaves together.
2. Your group is a target in the lobby, outside the hotel getting into vehicles, driving to the airport and walking into the airport.
3. Any bad guys watching you will know something is going on when everybody starts showing up downstairs with their bags.
4. Even worse the hotel staff could have been paid off to collect your trash, or they can call the bad guys when you check out of the hotel or even when one of your team is drunk in the hotel bar so be forewarned!

Tips and Tricks!

1. Leave for the airport early in the morning, the more hostile the area the earlier you leave the hotel, like 3-6 A.M early!
2. It's safer at the airport than at hotel, or in route to the hotel as most hotels have security guards or military forces protecting them, but they are still a risk to the team.
3. If billing is going to take time, have everybody go to one room while the other rooms are checked in and then do a slow movement out of the hotel while the last room is being paid for.
4. Get in your transport vehicles fast, stay in sight of each other and don't go straight to the airport, use a little battlefield deception and make the bad guys think you are going somewhere else. An extra 10 minutes of driving is worth not getting caught in a no-survivor ambush.

End of Mission Activities:

1. All personnel involved both with the travelers and with management need to write out an After Action Report. These reports capture what went right or wrong, important contacts, areas and people to avoid, things needed, or basically everything that made the mission a success or a failure. Advice for both groups is to make a running list so big things are not missed that could sabotage the next group to leave.
2. Recovering important and sensitive equipment from the travelers needs to be done as quickly as possible. Best case scenario the equipment and the travelers are under the organization's control and are picked up at the airport debriefed and return the equipment to the organization and then are released to go home and recover. Worst case scenario you don't see the travelers for a week or two after they have arrived in country and they've lost or had the sensitive equipment stolen.