



The Perils of Executive Driving Overseas



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DURING MY TENURE AS UNITED Nations Security Chief, and in running my executive protection firm, I've witnessed every conceivable driving mishap by executives and diplomats. Traveling via vehicle presents its own set of security challenges for CEOs and other top executives.

Executives driving abroad on business, or in unfamiliar routes here in the United States, should chart their travel ahead of time to ensure that they drive on main roadways and avoid poorly lit streets where they may be vulnerable to predators. It is highly recommended that executives employ the use of a driver who has a high-level security background. The top mistakes senior executives make while driving are:

Being Carjack Bait by Failing to Maintain Distance from Other Cars—Potential carjacking situations can be avoided by maintaining your car's distance from other vehicles. Do not stop directly behind the vehicle in front of you, and leave room to go around it even if you need to drive on the sidewalk or over the curb. You want to be able to go around the car in front if the driver stops short. With carjacking, the car in front often stops and the second car blocks you from the rear.

Driven to Rural Outposts—Preparation is key when driving in unfamiliar territory. Be sure to maintain a steady course on highly populated major roadways. Avoid driving on poorly lit streets, particularly when you are out of your normal element. Your unsteady, unsure driving could attract predators. You need to learn about the region you're driving in before you arrive. Learn what areas are unsafe or unsavory at night.

Stopping at Every Red Light—While it's certainly not advisable to run a red light, it's best to time your arrival at each intersection to meet a green light. Every moment that your car idles at a red light provides opportunity for predators to ambush you.



While it's certainly not advisable to run a red light, it's best to time your arrival at each intersection to meet a green light. Every moment that your car idles at a red light provides opportunity for enemies to ambush you.

Failure to Keep the Vehicle Mechanically Fit and Not Being "Tanked Up"—If you're driving your own car on business, it's imperative that the vehicle be professionally maintained. If you're renting a car, opt for the newest models that are available. While you need to be sober while driving, you'll want your car to be filled up to the rim with a full tank of gas. Don't wait until your car is below a half of a tank.

Driving a "Rolls" When a Honda Will Do—While it's an ego boost to drive a high-status car, it's also a red alert to criminals. Avoid the 'bling' when renting, leasing or buying automobiles for business travel, and ride reliable, high-quality automobiles that won't attract undue attention.

Failure to Keep Safety Equipment Onboard—When driving, you should maintain your safe-driving arsenal including flashlight, spare tire that's not flat, jumper cables, first aid kit, maps, and if possible, invest in a Global Positioning System (GPS). Travel with a mobile telephone and spend the extra money on a car charger for the telephone when you purchase a new mobile telephone.

Parking in Dark Areas—A common mistake is to park a vehicle in the daytime without thinking whether your parking area is remote, and in an unlit area come

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evening. Be sure to park where there are attendants nearby, and find out if you're parking where an attendant is on duty 24 hours a day.

Failure to Check the Car and Back Seat Before Entering the Vehicle—Predators like to hide in the back seat or any other roomy area in a vehicle that may be undetected. Never leave a pocketbook or backpack on the front seat. Even if windows are closed, it's a common practice for thieves to smash the window, reach into the vehicle and steal the purse or other personal belongings.

Driving Solo Sans Strangers—Sometimes it is unavoidable to drive solo, but there is always safety in numbers. Whenever possible, drive with a fellow passenger or two. However, that doesn't mean picking up hitchhikers. Never stop your vehicle to offer assistance to a hitchhiker, or provide a lift. Make a mobile call to help them if needed, but never provide ground transport to a stranger.

Failure to Send SOS—If you're being forced off the road, be sure to engage in a defensive driving 'SOS'—make noise, flash your lights, and find a well-lit, populated place to pull in to. Find out what shops are open late if coming home at night. Do not try to be smart and throw your keys away so a carjacker can't take the car. Your life is worth more than your car. If you are facing a

carjacker, don't make any quick moves. Be sure to tell the carjacker you are removing your seatbelt, for example, as you don't want him to think you are going for a gun. Get out of the car, as the majority of injuries occur when someone is pulled from the car and dragged because their seatbelt catches on their clothes or is not released.

Defensive driving demands being an educated driver. Keep your doors locked when driving, and watch the rearview mirror to gauge suspicious surveillance. Carry a telephone number to a taxi service that serves where you are traveling and know their hours of operation.

Know in advance the difference between an "authorized" police checkpoint and a "random unauthorized" checkpoint before setting out on a route. Personal security is a sacred responsibility for all American business travelers and vital for promoting American economic and commercial interests worldwide. ■

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