

Risky Business: Security Firms for Hire



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Opinions are divided industry-wide as to whether travelers should enlist their own security protection, but people are increasingly investigating the prospect, if not necessarily hiring bodyguards and armored cars. London-based security firm AKE International (44-20/3816-9970; akegroup.com), which specializes in the safety of reporters in war zones, said requests for intelligence reports rose 20 percent after Paris's November 13 terrorist attacks.

"People are much more aware with regard to personal security planning and are questioning their holiday destinations and asking, 'Is it worth going there?'" says Rory Lamrock, associate director at AKE, which will supply country-specific security reports for \$580, electronic tracking of travelers using smartphones and satellites for \$1,450 per month, and custom assessments that include risk analysis and mitigation advice for \$2,900.

Even the most independent traveler may want to consider using a trusted tour operator who can provide a local contact to manage an emergency. Philippe Brown, founder of the London-based travel outfit Brown + Hudson (44-20/3358-0110; brownandhudson.com), has hired nannies and guides with defensive training to discreetly accompany travelers, charging roughly an extra \$1,450 per staffer per day, plus expenses. "We need to cover all those angles, and the angles are ever changing," he said.

Smartphone apps are an emerging option. The free GeoSure Global app uses crime- and safety-related statistics, as well as social-media-generated local intelligence, to deliver location-specific threat assessments, subject to having a critical mass and cell-phone service, two variables vulnerable in the hottest regions.