

HORUS SECURITY CONSULTANCY



BRIEFING NOTE: BRAZIL RISK ASSESSMENT , MAY 2017

Thursday, 27 April 2017

Horus Security Consultancy has been tasked to provide a risk assessment for Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte covering the period around the International Veterinary Biosafety Workgroup (IVBW, 12 – 15 June 2017) at which a member of staff from the University of Zurich will be present. The following is a Horus Briefing Note on the threat environment in Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte, touching also on wider issues such as travel and transport in Brazil, which assesses specific risk associated with the IVBW and for staff travelling from the University of Zurich.

Key Assessments

- The risk from terrorism in Brazil is LOW.
- Political developments pose a potential threat to the IVBW and University of Zurich staff if they cause further outbreaks of civil unrest in Brazil. Visitors should avoid political events and should maintain an awareness of the local political situation.
- Any security risks or travel disruption is best mitigated by attention to local advice on the day.
- Crime: Levels of crime in locations to be visited by University of Zurich staff are HIGH. There is a significant risk from street crime, including violent crime, in tourist zones and on public transport, especially at night.
- Health: Heavy rain from December to June increases the risk of flooding and the spread of disease through contaminated water and mosquito bites.
- The risk of hate-related crimes against University of Zurich staff on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or nationality is LOW. There is an elevated risk of verbal or physical assault for LGBT travellers, including in all locations to be visited by University of Zurich staff.
- There is no evidence to suggest that the Laboratorio Nacional Agropecuario MG will be targeted by activists groups during the IVBW.

Country Threat Levels

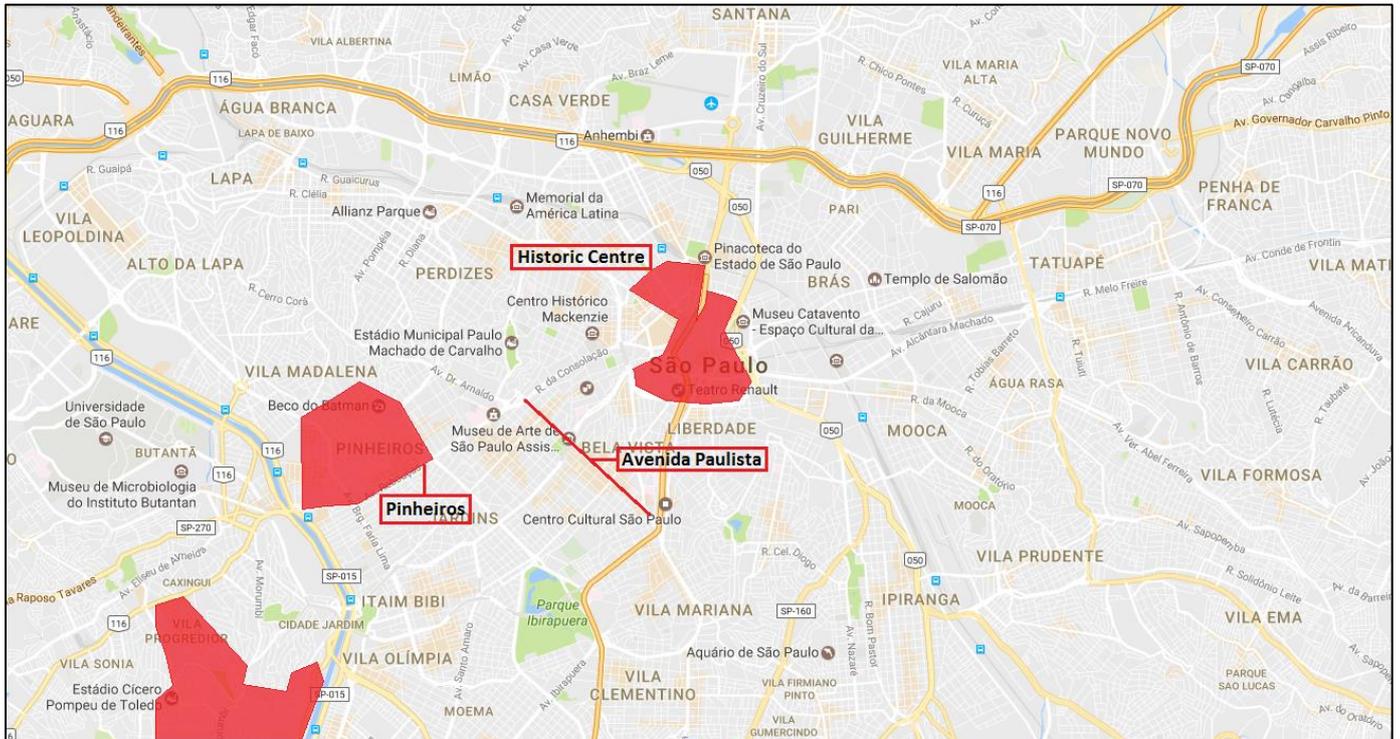
- Brazil; the threat of terrorist attack in Brazil is low. Organised criminal groups and anarchist movements have in the past used small scale bombings, but these incidents are rare and typically low impact. Brazil is a non-aligned country with strong regional relationships, and there is no evidence to suggest that terrorism poses a significant risk to the IVBW or to University of Zurich staff.
- The impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016 sparked widespread civil unrest across Brazil. Recent opinion polls suggest that President Michel Temer, Rousseff's successor, is deeply unpopular. Under the Temer administration, Brazil's political situation has temporarily stabilised. However, further political developments may potentially reignite civil unrest, causing large-scale disruptive events which would inevitably impact travel and safety throughout the country. **A general strike has been organised for 28 April 2017 which Horus will monitor for any indications of a shift in Brazil's political climate.**

Travel in Sao Paulo – Airports and Local Transport

- Guarulhos International Airport (GRU)
 - On several occasions in 2016, protestors held demonstrations on nearby motorways aimed at preventing transportation between the airport and the city centre. At time of writing, no plans for similar demonstrations in June 2017 have been published in Open Source (OS), but the risk of travel disruption cannot be ruled out, particularly in the event of changes to the political atmosphere.
 - Previous travellers to the airport have reported lengthy delays at customs and immigration control.
 - Heavy traffic often leads to lengthy delays travelling to and from the airport, sometimes up to three hours during peak times. Visitors are advised to allow plenty for plenty of time when travelling to and from the airport.
- Local transport in Sao Paulo is provided by taxis, buses, and a metro system.
 - There are numerous taxis throughout the city. Official taxis are white and all bear an official licence sticker with the driver's name and photograph. Although official taxis are generally considered to be a safe method of transportation, visitors should take care to avoid illegal or unlicensed taxis.
 - Visitors are advised to avoid public buses, particularly at night. Many pass through high-crime areas, and in the past have been targeted by armed criminals. **Visitors should never wait alone at bus stations at night, as muggings and assaults frequently occur in these areas.**
 - The metro system is clean and efficient. However, at peak hours trains can become extremely crowded, and incidents of pickpocketing do occur. Female travellers often report being touched inappropriately on crowded trains.

Crime & Civil Unrest in Sao Paulo

- **Crime poses a significant threat to visitors in Sao Paulo;** petty crime including robbery and muggings are common. The Historic Centre and Pinheiros districts (pictured below) in particular have elevated crime levels.
- Visitors should remain alert and maintain situational awareness at all times, especially when using public transportation, outside hotels, and within tourist areas such as the historic centre, parks, and recreational areas.
- Street crime is a serious problem in Sao Paulo, especially in the evenings and late at night. Visitors are advised not to walk through deserted areas, such as parks or public squares, alone at night.
- **Visitors should never use ATMs at night,** and should exercise caution when using them during the day. Criminals often target people at cash points, and visitors should only use ATMs during daytime in non-secluded areas, preferably ones which are indoors.
- When travelling by car or by taxi at night, visitors should keep the doors locked and windows closed.
- Laptops are some of the most commonly stolen objects in Sao Paulo. Visitors should keep electronic devices, as well as all other valuables, out of sight at all times.
- **Visitors should never enter Sao Paulo's *favelas*, the city's low-income slums which can be extremely dangerous.**



1. Central Sao Paolo can be dangerous for visitors at night. Staff are advised to use official taxis whilst travelling at night.

- Demonstrations in Sao Paolo occur on a daily basis, especially in the Praça da República and the Praça da Se in the historic centre, the Largo de Batata in the Pinheiros district, and along the Avenida Paulista. Protests are generally conducted peacefully, however outbreaks of violence do occasionally occur. Demonstrations can also take place with little prior warning. Visitors are advised to avoid areas where protests are being held and to approach crowds with caution.
- In the past taxi drivers have held strikes over disputes with ride-sharing apps such as Uber, and have even clashed with Uber drivers. Although there is no evidence in OS at time of writing to suggest that a taxi strike is planned during IVBW, University of Zurich staff are advised only to use official taxis and to avoid using Uber.

Travel in Belo Horizonte – Airports and Local Transport

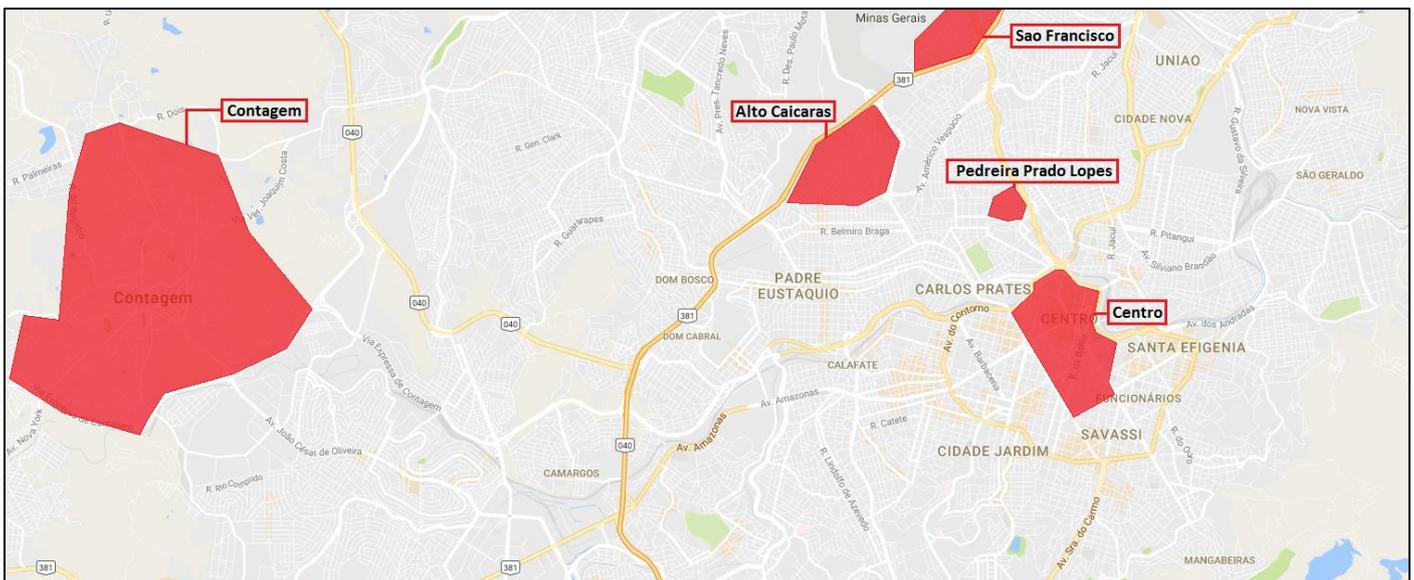
Horus understands that transport is being provided for IVBW attendees travelling between the Promenade Hotel Lagoa Santa and the Laboratorio Nacional Agropecuario MG each day, along with transfers from Confins Airport to the conference hotel. When University of Zurich staff are travelling to and around Belo Horizonte it is worth considering the following points:

- Gol Transportes Aéreos is a major Brazilian domestic carrier. In 2006 a Gol flight collided with another aircraft and crashed in the Amazon, leaving no survivors. Nevertheless, the airline currently operates at a safety level comparable to carriers in Western Europe and North America.
- Confins Airport (CNF)
 - The airport is adjacent to Lagoa Santa and is located 40km from central Belo Horizonte. The airport has recently been upgraded, although previous travellers have noted that few airport staff speak English or German.
- Public transportation in Belo Horizonte is provided by buses, taxis, and a metro system.
 - Taxis in Belo Horizonte are safe and reliable.

- Buses are colour coded according to their destination, but maps of the system are not always posted at stops. Buses are also extremely crowded and slow during peak hours, and visitors are advised only to use pre-planned routes.
- The metro system is slow and the network does not fully cover the city. **Entrances to metro stations are also often hotspots for criminal activity and can be dangerous late at night.**

Crime in Belo Horizonte

- Belo Horizonte is relatively safer than other large cities in Brazil. The crime rate is high, but criminal activity tends to be concentrated in districts most affected by the trade in illicit drugs.
 - Visitors should nevertheless remain vigilant whilst in Belo Horizonte and should stay within well-lit, crowded public areas in the city's tourist district. Muggings, especially at traffic lights, are not uncommon, and criminals target overseas visitors. Disorientated-looking tourists are particularly vulnerable, especially outside transit hubs such as the main bus station in the Centro district.
- Visitors should exercise a high degree of caution when walking through the central district at night, and should avoid areas such as the Contagem, Alto Caieiras, Sao Francisco, and Pedreira Prado Lopes districts (pictured below).
- **Visitors should never walk alone down deserted streets or alleyways in Belo Horizonte, and should keep all electronics and valuables out of sight.**
- Visitors are advised to exercise reasonable judgement when exploring Belo Horizonte, and always to seek local advice before travelling to unfamiliar areas in the city.



Civil Unrest in Belo Horizonte

Demonstrations and protests are frequent in Belo Horizonte. Although most have been conducted peacefully, protests often cause severe traffic congestion in the city. **Visitors should take steps to avoid political events.**

- Most demonstrations in Belo Horizonte have been called in support of a variety of left-wing causes. On 31 March 2017, students and union groups staged a large demonstration in the Centro district outside the main bus station along with a strike to protest against the government's proposed pension and labour reforms. This event was organised as a precursor to a general strike on 28 April which is expected to shut down the city's public transport system. Given the leftward-leaning politics of Minas Gerais state, it is likely that the strike will be large and disruptive, and may inspire further demonstrations against the government.

- Poor drainage increases the risk of the spread of disease during wet months, including dengue fever and chikungunya. Zika virus is also prevalent in Brazil, including both Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte. **University of Zurich staff should take appropriate precautions to avoid mosquito bites, and female travellers who are pregnant or are considering having children in the near future should seek medical advice about the risks of Zika before travelling.**
- The US Centres for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that all travellers should be up to date on routine vaccinations as well as Hepatitis A and Typhoid before travelling to Brazil, especially if visitors will be travelling to smaller cities such as Lagoa Santa.
 - Yellow Fever is a risk in Minas Gerais. The CDC recommends Yellow Fever vaccination for those travelling to Belo Horizonte.
 - Although malaria is present in Brazil, transmission is not known to occur in either Sao Paulo or Minas Gerais.
 - Rabies vaccination is only recommended for travellers who will be working with animals or plan on participating in outdoor activities such as hiking or caving.

Other

By nature, Brazil is an ethnically diverse country with numerous nationalities represented in all major cities. Brazilian society maintains a strong rhetorical commitment to racial and cultural tolerance and hate-related crimes rarely occur to overseas visitors.

- However, some visitors have reported receiving unwanted comments because of their nationality or race. University of Zurich staff should be prepared to ignore discriminatory comments and to avoid altercations whilst in Brazil.
- Although homosexuality is legal in Brazil, violence against LGBT individuals is a serious concern, even in Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte which have large LGBT communities. Numerous cases of verbal and physical assaults against LGBT people have been reported along the Avenida Augusto de Lima in downtown Belo Horizonte.
 - Open displays of affection between homosexual couples may increase the risk of unwelcome attention, especially whilst travelling or outside urban areas, such as Lagoa Santa. **Transgender individuals face a higher risk of discrimination and violence, even in major cities.**
- Open discrimination on the basis of religion is rare in Brazil, and is not assessed to pose a significant risk to IVBW or to University of Zurich staff.
 - Visitors should note that Brazilian law restricts preaching or praying in public areas.
 - Although Brazil does not ban traditional religious dress, wearing clothing such as a hijab, niqab, or burka will likely attract attention from passers-by. Authorities may demand to see someone's face to confirm identity.
- **Police in Brazil operate a zero-tolerance policy for driving under the influence and penalties can be severe.** Visitors should not attempt to drive after drinking, regardless of the quantity of alcohol consumed.
- The traditional Roman Catholic feast of Corpus Christi will be celebrated on 15 June. The day is typically marked by special church services and religious processions, however, these events are not expected to significantly disrupt IVBW or travel by University of Zurich staff.
- Visitors are required to carry identification at all times and may be asked to present an ID by authorities.