

Crime

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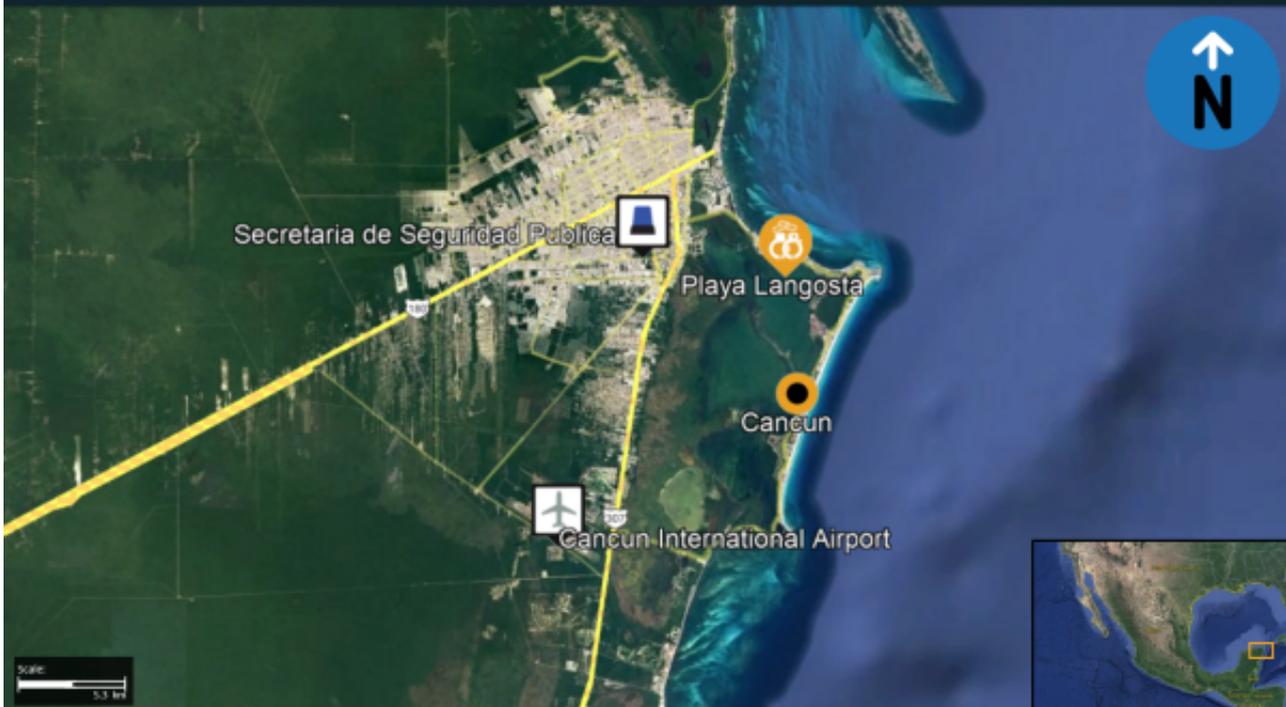
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Mexico Alert: Armed individuals fire shots in air at beach near Cancun's Hotel Zone, Quintana Roo on December 8; reiterates threat posed to bystanders in tourist areas

Please be advised

- Reports indicate that a group of armed individuals arrived on jet skis and fired gunshots in the air at a beach in Playa Langosta, within the Hotel Zone of Cancun, Quintana Roo, during the afternoon hours (local time) on December 8. No injuries were reported.
- However, the incident led to panic among the beachgoers and prompted them to seek immediate refuge nearby. While authorities seized the jet skis, the attackers managed to flee the scene. Investigations into the incident are currently underway.
- Following this, the US Department of State reissued a travel warning for the Quintana Roo state in Mexico, noting that travelers should “exercise increased caution due to crime.”
- Previously, on November 4, a [shooting](#) incident between rival gangs left two dead, and one bystander injured in the vicinity of a hospitality establishment in Puerto Morelos, near Cancun. A similar gang-related shooting was recorded in Tulum's Mini Quanta neighborhood in October, which left two foreign nationals dead and three injured.

LOCATION OF SHOOTING IN CANCUN, QUINTANA ROO



Assessments & Forecast

1. While no details on the perpetrators have been released as of writing, the modus operandi suggests that the attack was likely carried out by members of an organized crime group active in the region. With reports indicating that gunshots were fired in the air, coupled with the fact that no one was injured, it is unlikely that tourists were the intended targets.
2. Given precedent, it remains highly possible that the attack was an attempt to target rival gang members at the location, which failed to escalate into a crossfire due to bolstered security presence at the beach. This is supported by the fact that around 1,500 Guardia Nacional troops have been stationed in Cancun's tourist zones since the November 4 shooting incident. Alternatively, since gunshots were fired indiscriminately in the air, it is also plausible this was an attempt to intimidate police personnel in the region.
3. Overall, the incident reiterates the continued threat of gang violence across Quintana Roo's popular tourist destinations, especially Cancun, Tulum, and Playa del Carmen, with tourists being caught in the crossfire during similar incidents in the past. In addition, despite authorities' prompt response to the incident, it is likely to be viewed as a failure in the government's attempts to improve the state's security situation amid rising gang-related violence, especially given that the incident follows the setting up of a special force dedicated to tourists' security in the area.
4. **FORECAST:** Given the higher tourist footfall during the holiday period between December and March, which is seen as a lucrative season for the sale of drugs, organized crime groups such as the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), Los Zetas, and Sinaloa cartel, and their respective micro-trafficking affiliates will likely continue to engage in armed clashes to control the key maritime drug-trafficking routes and drug markets in Quintana Roo.
5. **FORECAST:** Gang-related shootings in facilities frequented by tourists such as restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and beaches will continue to pose a credible security threat to bystanders despite enhanced security measures as evidenced in the past.
6. **FORECAST:** Should similar incidents continue to occur, more countries, like the USA, are likely to issue strict travel advisories for Quintana Roo, which is liable to lead to the area being viewed

as unsafe for travel by domestic and foreign visitors. With this, authorities are expected to revise the existing measures and strengthen police patrols in the near term.

Recommendations

1. Travel to tourist hotspots in Mexico can continue while remaining cognizant of COVID-19 restrictions and maintaining heightened vigilance for the increasing threat of violent gang and cartel activity.
2. Foreign nationals and visitors in Quintana Roo are advised to increase vigilance outside of hotel complexes and along coastal areas in light of the latent potential for violence.
3. In the event that an accommodation or event is targeted by cartel members, it is advised to evacuate nonessential personnel immediately from the site, while avoiding any interaction with the criminal groups where possible and contacting local and home-nation authorities.
4. If a potential shooting or similar incident manifests, it is advised to leave the area immediately, if possible, or take shelter at a secure location.
5. MAX Security has strong on-ground capabilities in Mexico to facilitate contingency planning or provide custom travel risk assessments to meet your needs. Contact us at intel@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434.