ARE YOU IN BRAZIL OR TRAVELLING TO BRAZIL?

LAST MINUTE SECURITY REMINDER FOR JOURNALISTS

General Top Tips

Before travel...check your insurance and ensure you and your equipment are covered for Brazil and the region.

Copy all documents as a back-up from passport to press pass and import/export certificate for specific equipment.

1. Keep a low profile with what you wear – specifically in your wearing of jewellery.

2. Take the following:

   A water/camel pack so you stay hydrated
   A medical kit
   Energy bars
   Sun cream and after-sun
   Bump hat
   Eye protection
   Good footwear
   Mugger’s wallet (spare wallet with expired cards and minimal cash)

3. Ensure you know what to do in the event of tear gas being used.

4. Ensure you have a good communications plan – and know when/how often to check in with your newsroom. Consider using a panic button tracking device on your phone.

5. There is safety in numbers – if you can, work in a group to ensure you do not become isolated.

6. Be aware of your personal online and banking security. Cards are being cloned.
The beaches (Flamengo, Copacabana, Ipanema)

Copacabana, Ipanema are the busiest beaches and very touristy, with waves, so surfing can be good. Flamengo is not as busy and although is still busy it is not as cramped.

Botafogo has nice sands but as the marina is next to it, people don’t like going there as they say the water is dirty. But still white sands, no waves.

Don’t take valuables to the beaches. Pickpockets stroll the beaches, and although there are police patrolling the beaches the thieves will wait until they pass. Take only take a small amount of money and hide it in your belongings. Do not take valuables. When you go swimming, think about using a waterproof money pouch if you have one and don’t want to leave anything on the beach. Don’t take anything you are not prepared to lose if you go swimming and have to leave your things on the beach.

Pickpockets

Rio is rife with pickpockets. Make sure you consider the “mugger’s wallet” mentioned above or carrying some money which you are happy to hand over if you get mugged. Make sure you break up your money and don’t carry all of it with you on the streets.

Be careful on buses or trains, as the pickpockets are clever and good at what they do. You will not feel them taking things from your pockets or bags. Make sure you hide wallets/purses from view and don’t walk down the road using your phone. Keep it out of sight on the streets and make calls in restaurants and shops. Don’t be a target!

Cloning of credit cards

It is well known that Rio is prone to “cloning” thieves. ATMs outside banks are ripe for the picking; often they show no signs of having been tampered with. Try to take cash with you, but if you need to use credit cards, then use them in the bank’s ATM (where there is more security and they are more regularly checked).

Try not to use them in petrol stations, restaurants and shops unless you have to. Make sure that your credit card does not leave your sight and they key in the amounts in front of you.

Before you travel, inform your bank of where you are going and try to set a daily limit. Remember a debit card is your money and a credit card is the credit companies’ money, so you are safer using credit cards. Check to see whether Visa or MasterCard is acceptable in the hotel you will be staying. Sometimes they do not accept both.
Are you planning to cover protests?

General advice

The advice below will not prevent you being attacked, but it may help you to avoid getting into a situation that is potentially dangerous.

You are not advised to cover protests if you:

- Have not undertaken a hostile environment course
- Do not have up to date medical training
- Are an inexperienced journalist
- Do not have a local fixer
- Do not have a robust communications plan
- Do not have emergency plans in place
- Do not understand the way demonstrations take place and the tactics of the security forces, as well as the weaponry that is used and why

Preparation

Ensure you have considered the following prior to going to cover protests

- Have a plan – decide what your story really is, do you need to go there to get the story? Can you get it another way?
- How long do you need there and why?
- Have a plan for emergencies and know the area of the protests. Do a map study and plan escape routes.
- Think safety in numbers. Broadcast journalists should try to be in a group of three people and stick together. Individuals should try to go with other journalists.
- Take someone with you who knows the area.
- Find a fixer to act as your guide. This may give you some level of protection.
- If you are a foreigner and do not know the language (Portuguese in Brazil), take a translator with you.
- What time of the day do you need to go to get the story, can it be done during the daylight? The night is always more dangerous as the dark hides the criminal elements and the security forces find it more difficult to react - and can overreact.
- Atmosphere – try to get a sense of the mood in the morning. Who is there, what are people doing?
- Where will you keep your valuables?
- Ensure your accreditation is in order and easily accessible. Carry a photocopy of your press accreditation and telephone numbers of your editor and lawyer.
• Make sure your editor knows how to reach your family in case you’re arrested or hurt.
• Ensure they know how the legal system works in the country you are working in.
• Think, if you get arrested, how do they get you out?
• You may wish to alert the authorities that your news organisation plans to cover the protests, if it is appropriate and not dangerous to do so in the country you are in. If so, obtain the mobile number of the person in charge; the more senior the better.
• Take protective gear. This can include helmets, gas masks, escape hoods or bullet proof vests with protective plates, if possible. Your decision regarding this may depend on what weapons the local police force uses for crowd control and the projectiles the protesters are throwing (see Equipment).
• Wear comfortable boots that you can run in.
• Wear natural fabrics, which may be less flammable than synthetic fabrics.
• Pack a medical kit and know how to use it.
• Set your mobile phone to speed dial with an emergency number pre-set.
• Consider filming from high vantage points. Agree a rendez-vous point in case you lose your team and agree a “safe” place where you can retreat if the situation becomes too dangerous.

Equipment

Ensure you take the following:
Backpack with:
• Photocopies of your documents. Do not take your passport, take a colour photocopy. Money.
• Any prescription drugs.
• Appropriate clothing (i.e. a sunhat and sunscreen if it’s hot, a raincoat or umbrella if it’s raining, a sweater or jacket if it’s cold).
• Water for drinking and for washing away tear gas.
• Food (i.e. snack bars).
• Torch and spare batteries.
• Goggles and dust mask, or preferably a respirator/gas mask with a spare canister.
• Hard hat/bump cap to protect your head against bricks being thrown.
• Small fire extinguisher.
• Eye drops.
• Medical pack with equipment for burns and gunshots.
• Compass and map so you know where you are and which way to run to safety.
• Transport and routes into the protest areas.
• Think about the transport you’re going to use to get there. This is likely to be complicated by the nature of the ‘shutdown’, but it is advisable to have a car on standby as near to the protest area as possible for use in the event of an emergency. The driver must stay by the vehicle.
• Ensure you have communications with your driver, so you can get them to assist you if
needed.

- Ask yourself, what is the best approach to the protest area? Seek local advice.

**Thoughts for consideration**

- If you take pictures of people doing bad things, it is likely they will turn on you. This applies to the security forces and locals. Both sides can be just as aggressive.
- Ask whether it is safer to send a man or a woman. Would it be safer to send a man given the atmosphere?
- If your fixer or your local guide says it is time to leave, trust them.
- If you get into trouble, you may not be able to get help. You have to be self-sufficient.
- Ask yourself - what will you do if you are attacked or assaulted? Have a plan.

**On the ground**

- As soon as you arrive, look for escape routes and ensure you know the landmarks to head for if you become disorientated.
- Try to stay on the edge of the crowd and do not get caught on the line between police and protesters.
- Crowds have a life of their own. Be constantly aware of the mood and attitude.
- Alert your editors if the mood starts to change and begin to think of what your plan is.
- If planning to change direction, seek advice from people who have just come from the direction you're heading.
- Television crews should travel as lightly as possible. If experiencing aggression, ensure your backpack is big enough to hold the tripod and pack it away. Be prepared to leave it behind if you need to run away.
- Avoid horses; they bite and kick.
- Try to avoid getting in the line of the water being fired as it will damage your kit. It often has dye in it for the security forces to be able to identify the protesters after.
- If the police detain you, try to ask them to call the person in charge if you have their number. Try to speak to a senior officer, as this will have more impact.
How to protect yourself from tear gas

Security forces are legally allowed to use tear gas for crowd control, but there are strict international guidelines around their use and the way they may be deployed against civilians for crowd control.

Journalists covering demonstrations should be aware of the effects of tear gas and how to – and not to – effectively respond to their effects.

How does tear gas work?

Typical RCAs (Riot Control Agents - such as tear gas) are usually delivered by either a spray or a grenade canister fired from a baton gun. The canisters themselves can be hazardous as they usually generate a lot of heat and will cause nasty burns if handled. If they are fired at close range, they can cause serious damage to a person’s body and have resulted in death. French photographer Lucas Mebrouk Dolega was hit by a police tear gas canister while covering a protest in Tunisia in 2011 and subsequently died.

When chemicals used in tear gas react with moisture it causes a burning sensation, meaning that the eyes, skin and lungs are extremely susceptible. Oil-based creams, sunscreens and make-up will also absorb tear gas, so avoid wearing these when covering protests where it might be used. Avoid wearing makeup.

Tear gas attacks the lungs, so if you suffer from any respiratory diseases, including asthma, you should seriously consider the potentially dangerous effects this may have on your condition.

Streaming and burning of eyelids and throat as well as excessive coughing are all reactions to tear gas. An excess of mucus coming from the nose, eyelids and throat is also common. People often report that they feel disorientated and dizzy just after breathing it in.

The effects usually wear off within an hour, although the feeling of burning and highly irritated skin may persist for hours.

How to protect yourself

A gas mask (often called a respirator) is the best tool to protect yourself. They are not cheap, but they'll allow you to cover the story safely. They are subject to export licences in some countries, so ensure you have the correct paperwork to travel with them.

A gas mask consists of a rubber mask, with a canister and filter fitted to the side. It is fitted to the size and shape of your face, and you should not assume that yours will fit someone
else. Ensure you have a spare canister, as they do need changing after a set numbers of hours (this depends on the make and model of the gas mask, as well as how long you use it for).

If you already have a gas mask, make sure it is working properly and is correctly fitted. Any masks purchased online or in military surplus stores should be checked by an expert to ensure they work correctly.

The next best thing after a gas mask is an escape hood, which is cheaper and is not subject to the same export rules. You can also use a builder’s respirator that covers your nose and mouth – but make sure that you use appropriate filters. Failing that, a dust mask for DIY and building and airtight goggles will provide some degree of protection. INSI cannot guarantee the efficacy of these methods.

Myths and misconceptions

Sometimes, it’s hard to see through the cloud of myths surrounding tear gas protection. Reports, photographs and videos show protesters using improvised methods to counter the crippling effects – including tying plastic bottles and even bras to their faces.

While they may make for an amusing photo, these are not effective ways of countering this non-lethal chemical weapon.

INSI spoke to chemical weapons experts SecureBio about other home-made methods – which should be avoided!

1. Soaking a bandana or cloth in apple-cider vinegar and tightly covering your mouth with it.
   Why should it be avoided?

   The acid contained in the vinegar does not provide enough, if indeed any, protection to counter the effects of tear gas.

2. Smearing lime or lemon juice on the inside of a cloth and tightly covering your mouth with it.
   Why should it be avoided?

   This supposedly works on the same principal as the apple-cider vinegar, but again, should be avoided.

3. Soaking a bandana in water and tightly covering your mouth with it.
   Why should it be avoided?
Many RCAs come in the form of crystals which react with water. Using small amounts of water (such as a wet handkerchief) immediately after exposure to CS gas is likely to reactivate these crystals and may prolong the effects.

3. Smashing up charcoal, lining a wet bandana with the dust and tightly covering your nose and mouth with it.
Why should it be avoided?

The charcoal supposedly filters out CS gas, but there is no evidence to support this.

4. Smearing toothpaste under your eyes.
Why should it be avoided?

As RCAs and toothpastes are made up from a wide range of chemicals, using various manufacturing methods, it is nearly impossible to accurately predict the reactions that would take place.

5. Sniffing a freshly cut onion.
Why should this be avoided?

Breaking an onion in half, sniffing it and getting it close to your eyes does not reduce the irritation, and it is likely to make you cry just as it does when you are peeling it.

What to do if you get tear gassed

If you have a gas mask, or a mask and goggles, put them on. You may then be able to continue working in the gas. Be aware that you will still need to wash yourself and all clothes as the gas will remain on you, your clothes and your equipment.

If you have no protection, cover your mouth and nose with a handkerchief or cloth or use the inside of your coat jacket to protect the airway (the outside of your jacket is likely to be contaminated).

Stand in fresh air and allow the breeze, if there is one, to carry away the CS gas.

Keeping your arms outstretched will help CS gas to come off your clothing.

Try to get to high ground – most RCAs are heavier than air, so the highest concentrations tend to sit nearer to the ground.
Remember that the gas will impregnate clothing for many months after being contaminated, so any clothing that may have been contaminated should be immediately washed several times or totally discarded.

Remember that any exposed skin should be washed with soap and water. Shower first in cold water, then warm water. Do not bathe.

Remember that you should not rub your eyes or face, or this will reactivate any crystals.

*If symptoms persist, INSI advises that you consult a doctor.*
Are you going to be using ballistic vests?

General advice

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will stop certain bullets (rounds) if they are fired at the areas of your body which are protected and can save lives.

Ballistic vests/body armour does not take the place of good planning and a proper robust risk assessment process.

Look after your equipment and it will look after you.

Body armour is often referred to as a flak jacket, bullet proof vest or ballistic vest.

They are bullet-proof depending on the calibre and muzzle velocity of the bullet being fired at you. Do not allow your ballistic vest to lull you into a false sense of security. The best safety is to not be exposed to being shot or being shelled.

There are two main types of vest: soft vests and soft vests with plates. The former is made from many layers of woven or laminated fibres. It can be capable of protecting the wearer from small-calibre handgun and shotgun projectiles as well as small fragments from explosives such as hand grenades. The latter has plates which are usually made from ceramic or polyethylene - however, other materials are being developed and may be used. These plates are inserted into the pockets of a soft vest and the plates will provide additional protection from rifle rounds. There is often a groin protector, which can be dropped to cover this area when required.

The soft vest will provide resistance to stab and slash attacks from knives and similar close-quarter weapons. They also offer good protection against shrapnel and objects, such as bricks and bottles.

The plates must only be worn with the vest for which they were designed. This is vital as they are designed to absorb the high energy impact of ballistic rounds and stabs. The plates must never be worn on their own and both plates must be inserted to provide protection.

Look after your ballistic vest as the plates must not be dropped or they will crack and not work when you want them to. Do not throw your vest into the back of vehicles or drop them on the floor. When travelling think about taking the plates out and packing them in amongst soft clothing to protect them. When you insert the plates if you see the words ‘strike face’, ensure that this is facing outwards, away from your body.
This is a picture of a plate which has been shot at. The bullets did not go through the plate and saved a life. If you are shot at and the bullets hit the plate you may experience serious bruising, may be badly winded and may even have some broken ribs.

**Soft vests**, which are often easier to hide, are commonly worn by journalists doing undercover work or working in riots. Soft vests with plates should be worn in conflict areas or where there is no need to be covert.

**Ballistic vests** only cover the torso (which houses your vital organs) so the head is extremely vulnerable without a helmet. Make sure you wear a helmet to protect your head. Helmets will not stop bullets but may deflect them.

The specification for ballistic vests is shown by a system of numbers with NIJ in front of them. The normal specifications are as follows:

a. Covert body armour (soft vests): armour NIJ level Type IIIA
b. Conflict zone body armour (soft vests with plates): armour NIJ level Type III

c. If you believe armour piercing bullets will be used, you must use NIJ level 4 plates for protection. Please see the table (Test Summary - NIJ Standard) below for more details.

*It is important to carry out a comprehensive threat assessment, before specifying the threat level for ballistic plates. You should ask the following questions should you need to wear a ballistic vest:*

a. What type and style of weapons will I encounter in the country/situation I am going to? (Then ensure your vest covers this.)
b. What is the type, style and velocity of the ammunition being used?
c. What standard is the vest tested to and who tested it? Is it reputable?
d. Is the manufacturer recognised or accredited by a professional body?
e. How heavy is it and are you fit enough to wear it in hot countries for long periods of time?
f. How should it be cared for? What happens if it gets wet in the rain?
g. How is it measured to fit - is it one size fits all? Do you need female shape plates?
h. When will it need replacing? What is the shelf life?

The most common weapon used by counter-insurgents and in conflict areas is the AK-47 assault rifle and its derivatives. AK-47s use 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition (which is different from that used by Nato forces) of variable quality and consistency. AK-47 ammunition may also be armour piercing.

Consider what colour vest you want to wear in Brazil; the normal colour for journalists is blue (light and dark). If you are embedded with troops, they sometimes will make you wear the combat colour. However, it is advisable to steer away from combat colours so you are seen as neutral and a non-combatant. Consider whether you want to identify yourself as a journalist and whether you want to have ‘TV/Press’ on your equipment. Some vests have letters that you can attach with Velcro.

Vests can cost from £800 to £1500. The weight can vary depending on what they are made of. The plates will often stop up to two rounds, after which they may begin to break up.

The table below shows more specific details of weapons types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armor Type (Protection Level)</th>
<th>Test Ammunition</th>
<th>Nominal Bullet Mass</th>
<th>Suggested Barrel Length</th>
<th>Required Bullet Velocity</th>
<th>Required Hits Per Armor - Specimen</th>
<th>Permitted Penetration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I 22 LRHV</td>
<td>0.6 gr</td>
<td>0.6 gr</td>
<td>6 to 6.5 in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I 357 Magnum</td>
<td>10.2 gr</td>
<td>10.2 gr</td>
<td>10 to 12 cm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II 357 Magnum</td>
<td>10.2 gr</td>
<td>10.2 gr</td>
<td>10 to 12 cm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III 44 Magnum</td>
<td>15.25 gr</td>
<td>15.25 gr</td>
<td>14 to 16 cm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV 320.6</td>
<td>0.6 gr</td>
<td>0.6 gr</td>
<td>6 to 6.5 in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The views here are those of the author, however the information is based on technical specifications and expertise. They are meant to assist journalists in choosing the best equipment, following a rigorous risk assessment. INSI holds no responsibility for any ensuing problems, bodily harm or death as a result of the choice, use or wearing of this equipment in relation to this advice.
Your grab bag

General advice

Brazil is hot this time of year and with the traffic and the protests and the weather you don’t want to get caught out. Ensure you have a grab bag with you, with emergency kit in it.

These are just suggestions:

- Passes and other permits
- Passport and documents
- Local and foreign currency, credit cards
- Water and snacks
- Prescription and essential drugs
- Emergency contact numbers – hard copy
- Sunhat and sunscreen, lightweight sweater for aircon
- Mobile phones and chargers with spare batteries or power source
- First aid kit
- Torch with spare battery
- Wet wipes/toilet paper
- Compass/Map
- Tracker

Contact INSI if you require more advice

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