

# Kidnapping

Brazil



Special Risks Incident Report

# Kidnapping

## Brazil

### The situation

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An employee of a multinational mineral extraction company with operations in Brazil was kidnapped by a group of armed men whilst travelling to a local site. While the abduction appeared to be opportunistic, unbeknownst to the victim, the kidnappers had been monitoring his morning routine for some time; the group had initially been attracted to the victim due to his vehicle – a high profile SUV. The victim was driving alone in the SUV when the vehicle pulled out in front of him and two armed men blocked the road; due to his initial shock the victim failed to notice a third armed individual approaching from the rear. He was then driven at gunpoint to a remote location where he was held hostage. Fortunately the victim was not in possession of information that would have identified his status as a member of the local senior management team and at once began to convince the kidnappers that they had made an error. The kidnappers subsequently returned to search the abandoned vehicle to ascertain the identity of the victim and upon reviewing the vehicle found that it was registered to the company. The kidnappers questioned the victim who maintained that he was employed as a junior administrative employee and entrusted with the maintenance of the company's fleet of vehicles.

### How we assisted

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When the company's senior management team became aware that the missing employee had potentially been kidnapped, corporate security was informed and a call placed to red24's Special Risks Team, which assessed the situation and immediately placed a red24 KRE consultant on standby to assist. The initial call from the kidnappers was received on the second day, during which the perpetrators stated that an employee was being held hostage and confirmed proof of life. At this point, the red24 consultant was dispatched to support the company's local management team in Rio de Janeiro; a second consultant was deployed to advise the crisis management team remotely. During the negotiation process it became evident to the consultant that the kidnappers were not fully aware of whom they had abducted and this paved the way for a negotiating strategy to be implemented. A communication protocol was designed and roles were assigned to a hastily formed local crisis management team consisting of Brazilian nationals. This group was charged with several responsibilities but above all making salient decisions upon receiving advice from the consultant. The victim was held for a period of a few days and released after a small ransom was exchanged. The kidnapping incident and its successful resolution highlighted the significance of kidnapping as a security threat to their Brazilian operations, and became the first step in a process during which the company restructured their approach to security in Brazil. Robust measures were implemented and the response consultant returned to provide bespoke training and risk mitigation services to local employees, including security awareness presentations and defensive driving courses.

### Risk overview

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There is a high threat of kidnapping in Brazil. Well-organised, professional kidnap gangs operate alongside opportunistic individuals. These more sophisticated gangs have demonstrated the ability for rapid tactical evolution, which has placed further strain on the country's already over-stretched law enforcement apparatus. Although the vast majority of kidnap victims in Brazil are locals, the risk also extends to foreign nationals due to their perceived wealth, particularly those visiting the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo where kidnapping levels are among the highest in the country. Express kidnapping is also a growing concern in major urban centres, particularly in the abovementioned areas. As the kidnapping of a local or foreign employee of a company based in Brazil holds the potential to result in operational disruptions and financial risk, clients are advised to invest in risk mitigation planning in order to protect themselves and their employees from being targeted.

*red24 is a crisis management assistance company providing KRE risk mitigation and response services globally. red24 provides a range of other services, including travel safety assistance, product recall assistance (red24assist), cybercrime assistance as well as identity theft and fraud services. For more information, please visit [www.red24.com](http://www.red24.com).*

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