

# U.S. EMBASSY – MANILA

## American Citizen Services

May 2007

### *A Message from the U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines*

*Greetings from Manila!*

*With over 117,000 square miles, 7,000 islands, 79 provinces, and 115 cities, I am amazed at the sheer number of diverse places to visit within the Philippines. Among a dizzying array of other towns and areas, these past fourteen months have taken me north to Tarlac, south to General Santos City, east to Naga City, and west(ish) to Jolo to see first-hand all the treasures and astounding diversity that the Philippines has to offer. I am so fortunate to have a job that allows me to reach out to so many people, and as my tenure continues, I look forward to visiting many more locations within this great nation.*

*This past year has been a good year. I have already met quite a number of you, whether at official gatherings such as at the opening of the 2007 Earth Day ceremonies to swimming with the whale sharks in Donsol. I look forward to meeting many more of you during my official and unofficial travel throughout this country.*

*Much of the U.S. Embassy effort is devoted to services for Americans and Filipinos. One major goal is to serve and protect Americans. Although the American Embassy is physically situated in Manila, we work very hard to reach out past the capital to the over 250,000 Americans who are residing in or visiting the Philippines. We are so pleased that our past outreaches, in which our consular section teamed with the Veterans Affairs Office and the Social Security Administration, have proved extremely popular and useful to the American communities of Angeles, Olongapo, Bacolod, Iloilo, Palawan, Legaspi, and Baguio. In 2007, we look forward to continuing these robust outreach programs and to meeting and aiding more of you. One of our most important goals at the American Embassy is to provide outstanding service to each and every American within the Philippines, and we hope that these outreaches help us to fulfill this vital objective.*

*All of you know the incredibly special bonds of history we have here. We have a very close and special relationship that is very important to all of us. We have the oldest American Chamber of Commerce, as well as one of the oldest Peace Corps programs here. The United States' involvement in the Philippines goes back a long time. A peaceful, prosperous, democratic Philippines is absolutely in the interest of the United States of America.*

*As I experience and learn more about this geographically and culturally diverse country I hope to meet many more of you. And as always, I extend my best regards to you, your families, and your communities.*

*Kristie A. Kenney  
Ambassador*

## *A message from American Citizen Services (ACS) Chief*

*Here is the latest edition of the ACS Newsletter – packed with information we hope you will find interesting and helpful.*

*The transfer season has begun in earnest at the U.S. Embassy, a time when we bid farewell to colleagues we have worked with here in the Philippines and welcome new ones. American Citizens Services is no exception – JoAnn Donovan completes her tour in ACS after nearly two years with us. She worked in a number of positions at the Embassy; I think she saved the best for last! JoAnn has edited this newsletter for nearly two years, among her many other duties. We will miss JoAnn and wish her and her family all the best as she heads out to Washington.*

*I will complete my tour as ACS Chief on May 18, and depart for Washington for training and home leave. After that, I will transfer to Baghdad for an unaccompanied tour as Consular Section Chief.*

*Linda Daetwyler, now completing her second year as ACS Deputy Chief, will take over as ACS Chief on May 21. I could not have asked for a smoother transition, nor a better colleague to work with these two years. One of the characteristics of the “transfer season” is staffing gaps, and Linda’s successor as Deputy will arrive in the Fall.*

*I have enjoyed my assignment in Manila, and a large part of that is the pleasure of getting to know so many of you. A special mention of our volunteer U.S. citizen wardens: Thanks for all you do for your fellow citizens!*

***Christopher Rowan***  
***Chief, American Citizen Services***



# American Citizen Services

**American Citizen Services  
U.S. Embassy  
1201 Roxas Blvd.  
Ermita, Manila, Philippines**

**Consul General:** Richard D. Haynes  
**ACS Chief:** Christopher Rowan  
As of 5/21/07 Linda Daetwyler  
**Office:** 632-528-6300 x2246/2555  
**Fax:** 632-522-3242

## Passports

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 11:00am  
By phone: M-F, 2-4pm x5187  
For applications: FedEx 02-879- 4747 or  
<http://manila.usembassy.gov>

## Citizenship and Birth Registration

By phone: M-F, 2-4pm x5188  
By appointment only for forms/applications:  
FedEx 02-879-4747 or  
<http://manila.usembassy.gov>

## Notary Services

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 10:00am

## Legal Capacity to Marry

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 10:00am

**EMERGENCIES:** For emergencies after hours please call 63-2-528-6300 and ask for the Duty Officer.

**Website:** <http://manila.usembassy.gov>

**Email:** [acsinfomanila@state.gov](mailto:acsinfomanila@state.gov)

## **Virtual Consulate Davao:**

<http://www.usvirtualconsulatedavao.org/ph>

## **Online**

**Registration:** <https://travelregistration.state.gov>

**Cebu Consular Agency - Waterfront Hotel, Lahug**  
Tel: (032) 231-1261 Fax: (032) 231-0174

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## 2007 U.S. Embassy Holiday Closings

National Elections (PHL)	Mon, May 14
Memorial Day (USA)	Mon, May 28
Independence Day (PHL)	Mon, Jun 11
Independence Day (USA)	Wed, Jul 4
Labor Day (USA)	Mon, Sep 3
Columbus Day (USA)	Mon, Oct 8
Eid-ul-Fitr (PHL)	TBD
All Saint's Day (PHL)	Thurs, Nov 1
Veteran's Day (USA)	Mon, Nov 12
Thanksgiving Day (USA)	Thurs, Nov 22
Bonifacio Day (PHL)	Fri, Nov 30
Christmas Day (USA/PHL)	Tues, Dec 25
Last Day of the Year (PHL)	Mon, Dec 31

## 2007 Tentative Outreach Schedule

Cebu	Thurs - Fri, May 31 - Jun 1
Angeles	Thurs, Jul 19
Olongapo	Fri, Jul 20
Pangasinan	Fri, Aug 17

Dates are only tentative and subject to change

## Passport Renewal Reminder!!

**Please check your passport's validity date. If your passport has less than 6 months validity, you should apply for a replacement. It currently takes about two weeks to receive a new passport after it is approved.**

### New Cell Phone Policy for Visa Applicants

For safety and security reasons, immigrant and nonimmigrant visa applicants are no longer permitted to bring cell phones or any other electronic devices, i.e., PDA, laptops, MP3 players, etc., onto U.S. Embassy grounds. Effective March 1, 2007, visa applicants with these devices will be denied entry.

Additionally, no storage facility will be provided for them. Applicants who miss their visa appointment because of this new policy must reschedule through normal procedures.

Please note that this policy does not apply to our many other visitors going to the Chancery, American Citizen Services, Veterans Affairs, or Social Security areas, and the current policy of checking and storing cell phones at the door will remain in place for them.

This new policy only applies to our immigrant and nonimmigrant visa applicants.

### Social Security Administration Announcement

This is to notify the public that starting FEBRUARY 12, 2007 the SSA Division has been following an appointment system for all applicants filing for SSA benefits, i.e., retirement, survivors, child, parent and burial benefits.

The receptionist at the window still entertains walk-in clients for other SSA matters.

For general inquiries and appointment schedule, you may contact Embassy Trunk line: (02) 528-6300  
Extensions: 6302 or 2621

### Application for Consular Report of Birth Abroad

**The U.S. Embassy encourages U.S. citizen parents of children born in the Philippines to file the application for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) before their child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The processing of U.S. citizenship applications filed after the child has reached his/her 18th birthday is often complicated by the unavailability of timely issued documentations and/or the absence of sufficient information to establish the applicant's blood and legal relationship to his/her claimed parents, (especially for children who were born out of wedlock). Applications for CRBAs are accommodated by appointment only. To schedule an appointment, the application and supporting documents must be submitted to the U.S. Embassy via mail or courier. To avail of the Embassy-contracted courier service, please contact (02) 879-4747 between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on American and Philippine holidays.**

**REPORTING THE BIRTH:** A Consular Report of Birth (CRBA) is processed at an American consular office overseas only when the child is **under the age of 18**. Usually, in order to establish the child's citizenship under the appropriate provisions of U.S. law, the following documents must be submitted: (1) an official record of the child's foreign birth; (2) evidence of the parent(s)' U.S. citizenship (e.g., a certified birth certificate, current U.S. passport, or Certificate of Naturalization or Citizenship); (3) evidence of the parents' marriage, if applicable; and (4) affidavits of parent(s)' residence and physical presence in the United States.

In certain cases, it may be necessary to submit additional documents, including affidavits of paternity and support, divorce decrees from prior marriages, or medical reports documenting filiation. All evidentiary documents should be certified as true copies of the originals by the registrar of the office wherein each document was issued. A service fee of \$65 is prescribed under the provisions of Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 22.1, item 9, for a Consular Report of Birth.

Further information can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>.

## Some FAQs about the I-134, Affidavit of Support

**Should K-1 fiancé(e) visa applicants use the I-864 or the I-134?** Since fiancé(e)s are nonimmigrant visa applicants, they should use the I-134. They will need to submit an I-864 to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) when they adjust status to conditional immigrant in the United States after they are married.

**Do the same income requirements apply to all immigrant visa applicants even if they use the I-134?** **No.** The 125 percent minimum income requirement, the most recent year's tax return, and other requirements only apply when an I-864 is needed. Applicants using the I-134 will need to show that their sponsor's income is 100 percent of federal poverty guidelines as required under Section 212(a) (4) of the INA.

**Is there a fee to review the I-134 Affidavit of Support at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad?** **No.** When the I-134 (used for a K visa), is notarized at a U.S. embassy or consulate, a fee is not charged.

Further information can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>

### 2007 FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES

USA DC, PUERTO RICO, V. ISLANDS, GUAM			ALASKA			HAWAII		
SIZE	100%	125%	SIZE	100%	125%	SIZE	100%	125%
1	\$10,210	<b>\$12,763</b>	1	\$12,770	<b>\$15,963</b>	1	\$11,750	<b>\$14,688</b>
2	\$13,690	<b>\$17,113</b>	2	\$17,120	<b>\$21,400</b>	2	\$15,750	<b>\$19,688</b>
3	\$17,170	<b>\$21,463</b>	3	\$21,470	<b>\$26,838</b>	3	\$19,750	<b>\$24,688</b>
4	\$20,650	<b>\$25,813</b>	4	\$25,820	<b>\$32,275</b>	4	\$23,750	<b>\$29,688</b>
5	\$24,130	<b>\$30,163</b>	5	\$30,170	<b>\$37,713</b>	5	\$27,750	<b>\$34,688</b>
6	\$27,610	<b>\$34,513</b>	6	\$34,520	<b>\$43,150</b>	6	\$31,750	<b>\$39,688</b>
7	\$31,090	<b>\$38,863</b>	7	\$38,870	<b>\$48,588</b>	7	\$35,750	<b>\$44,688</b>
8	\$34,570	<b>\$43,213</b>	8	\$43,220	<b>\$54,025</b>	8	\$39,750	<b>\$49,688</b>
9	\$38,050	<b>\$47,563</b>	9	\$47,570	<b>\$59,463</b>	9	\$43,750	<b>\$54,688</b>
10	\$41,530	<b>\$51,913</b>	10	\$51,920	<b>\$64,900</b>	10	\$47,750	<b>\$59,688</b>
11	\$45,010	<b>\$56,263</b>	11	\$56,270	<b>\$70,338</b>	11	\$51,750	<b>\$64,688</b>
12	\$48,490	<b>\$60,613</b>	12	\$60,620	<b>\$75,775</b>	12	\$55,750	<b>\$69,688</b>
13	\$51,970	<b>\$64,963</b>	13	\$64,970	<b>\$81,213</b>	13	\$59,750	<b>\$74,688</b>
14	\$55,450	<b>\$69,313</b>	14	\$69,320	<b>\$86,650</b>	14	\$63,750	<b>\$79,688</b>
15	\$58,930	<b>\$73,663</b>	15	\$73,670	<b>\$92,088</b>	15	\$67,750	<b>\$84,688</b>
16	\$62,410	<b>\$78,013</b>	16	\$78,020	<b>\$97,525</b>	16	\$71,750	<b>\$89,688</b>
17	\$65,890	<b>\$82,363</b>	17	\$82,370	<b>\$102,963</b>	17	\$75,750	<b>\$94,688</b>
18	\$69,370	<b>\$86,713</b>	18	\$86,720	<b>\$108,400</b>	18	\$79,750	<b>\$99,688</b>
19	\$72,850	<b>\$91,063</b>	19	\$91,070	<b>\$113,838</b>	19	\$83,750	<b>\$104,688</b>
20	\$76,330	<b>\$95,413</b>	20	\$95,420	<b>\$119,275</b>	20	\$87,750	<b>\$109,688</b>

**NOTE: Minimum Income Requirement for Form I-134 is 100% of Poverty Guideline.**



## Help for American Victims of Crime Overseas

The Bureau of Consular Affairs, Overseas Citizens Services is committed to assisting American citizens who become victims of crime while traveling, working, or residing abroad. Government officials, known as consuls or consular officers, at embassies and consulates in nearly 250 cities throughout the world are responsible for assisting U.S. citizens who may be traveling, working, or residing abroad. In addition, in approximately 50 cities where a significant number of Americans reside or visit and there is no U.S. embassy or consulate, consular agents provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Consuls, consular agents, and local employees work with their counterparts in the Bureau of Consular Affairs Overseas Citizens Services Office in Washington, D.C. to provide emergency and non-emergency services to Americans abroad.

### How to Contact Us

Consular duty personnel are available for emergency assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas and in Washington, D.C. To contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the U.S. call 1-888-407-4747 (during business hours) or 202-647-5225 (after hours). To contact the U.S. Embassy in Manila call 63-2-528-6300 ext 2246, if after work hours ask for the Duty Officer.

### If You Are the Victim of a Crime Overseas

- Contact the nearest U.S. embassy, consulate, or consular agency for assistance.
- Contact local police to report the incident and obtain immediate help with safety concerns. Request a copy of the police report.

### Consular Assistance to American Crime Victims

Consular personnel can provide assistance to crime victims. When a U.S. citizen becomes the victim of a crime overseas, he or she may suffer physical, emotional, or financial injuries. Additionally, the emotional impact of the crime may be intensified because the victim is in unfamiliar surroundings. The victim may not be near sources of comfort and

support, fluent in the local language, or knowledgeable about local laws and customs.

Consuls, consular agents, and local employees at overseas posts are familiar with local government agencies and resources in the country where they work. They can help American crime victims with issues such as:

- Replacing a stolen passport;
- Contacting family, friends, or employers;
- Obtaining appropriate medical care;
- Addressing emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime;
- Obtaining general information about the local criminal justice process and information about your case;
- Obtaining information about local resources to assist victims, including foreign crime victim compensation programs;
- Obtaining information about crime victim assistance and compensation programs in the U.S.; and
- Obtaining a list of local attorneys who speak English.

***Consular officials cannot, however, investigate crimes, provide legal advice or represent you in court, serve as official interpreters or translators, or pay legal, medical, or other fees for you.***

### Individual Reactions to Crime Victimization

How individuals react to being the victim of a crime will vary from person to person. Reactions are affected by individual factors such as how the victim handles stress, the nature and duration of the crime, the physical safety of the victim, and the number and type of support systems available. Reactions to a crime may be immediate or delayed. The physical, emotional, or cognitive (involving thinking ability) symptoms a victim may experience could include nausea, headaches, fatigue, hyperventilation, or sleeping problems. Some victims report feelings of anxiety or fear, hyper-vigilance, guilt, anger, or isolation. Some experience difficulty making decisions, short-term memory problems, difficulty concentrating, or recurring memories of the crime.

It is important to realize that these are normal feelings, behaviors and reactions to an abnormal event. One of the first things to pay attention to is your need to feel safer. Addressing safety concerns and receiving emotional support can help. For most victims the reactions described above diminish with time. If these reactions persist and are disrupting your life or getting worse after three or four weeks, you should consider seeking professional assistance.

### **Resources and Information for Crime Victims:**

*Victim Assistance* : If you are the victim of a crime while overseas you may benefit from specialized resources for crime victims available in the U.S. Throughout the United States thousands of local crime victim assistance programs offer help to victims of violent crime and most will help residents of their community who have been the victim of a crime in another country. These include rape crisis counseling programs, shelter and counseling programs for battered women, support groups and bereavement counseling for family members of homicide victims, diagnostic and treatment programs for child abuse victims, assistance for victims of drunk driving crashes, and others. Information about locating crime victim assistance programs is below.

*Victim Compensation* : All states operate crime victim compensation programs and nearly half of them offer benefits to their residents who are victims of violent crime overseas. (See contact information for state compensation programs below.) These state compensation programs provide financial assistance to eligible victims for reimbursement of expenses such as medical treatment, counseling, funeral costs, lost income or loss of support, and others. Generally victim compensation programs require the victim to report the crime to law enforcement and they usually request a copy of the police report.

### **Contact Information for Victim Compensation and Assistance Programs:**

Information about each state's crime victim compensation program and how to apply for compensation is available on the Internet at the web site of the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, <http://www.nacvcb.org>

The toll-free 24 hours a day / 7 days a week hotline for sexual assault crisis counseling and referrals in the United States is 1-800-656-HOPE. It is operated by a non-profit organization, RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), which also has information on the Internet at <http://www.rainn.org>

Information about local sexual assault victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state's sexual assault coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions are listed at the website of the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women <http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>

The toll-free 24 hours a day / 7 days a week National Domestic Violence Hotline, which provides crisis counseling and referrals in the U.S., is 1-800-799-SAFE.

Information about local domestic violence victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state's domestic violence coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions is listed at the website of the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women <http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/statedomestic.htm>

The toll-free 24 hours a day / 7 days a week crisis counseling and referral line for families and friends of those who have died by violence is 1-888-818-POMC. It is operated by a non-profit organization, POMC, Inc., (The National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children) which also has information on the Internet at <http://www.pomc.org>

Information about national and local resources for victims and family members of victims of drunk driving crashes is available at the web site of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, <http://www.madd.org>

Contact information for non-emergency victim assistance services in communities throughout the U.S. is available at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, <http://ovc.ncjrs.org/findvictimservices/>

Information for crime victims on the impact of crime, safety planning, legal rights and civil legal remedies, and options for assistance and referrals to local programs is also available from the National Crime Victim Center. Call toll free (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

EST) 1-800-FYI-CALL or call TTY for hearing impaired (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST) 1-800-211-7996.

Call toll-free 24 hours a day / 7 days a week 1-800-TRY-NOVA. Information is also available on the Internet at <http://www.trynova.org>

Information is also available on the Internet at <http://www.ncvc.org> . Information and referral to victim assistance programs is available from the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA).

Information about victim assistance programs in approximately 20 countries is available at the web site of Victim Assistance On-line, <http://www.vaonline.org>

For further information go to <http://travel.state.gov>.

## A Sample Civics Lesson

**What do we celebrate on the 4th of July? Answer: Independence Day.**

Congress voted for the United States to become independent from Great Britain on July 2, 1776. However, we celebrate Independence Day on July 4. This is because it took two days for Congress to vote to accept an official *Declaration of Independence*. This Declaration was written by Thomas Jefferson and edited by Congress. It explained why the American colonies were separating from their British ruler. The 4th of July is now considered the birthday of America. We celebrate with parades, fireworks, the playing of patriotic songs, and live readings of the Declaration of Independence.

**How many branches are there in the United States government? Answer: There are three branches.**

The writers of the Constitution believed that no one group in government should have total power. They thought that any person or group that has total power over government usually abuses it. In creating the U.S. system, they followed the idea of separation of powers. Along with checks and balances among the parts of government, the separation of powers into three branches prevents concentration of power. This means that the rights of citizens are better protected. The powers to make laws, to execute laws, and to interpret the laws are given to different branches. These are the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

**Name one benefit of being a citizen of the United States. Answer: To obtain Federal government jobs, to travel with a U.S. passport, or to petition for close relatives to come to the United States to live.**

Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Earl Warren once said citizenship is “nothing less than the right to have rights.” Some of the most important of these are the rights to choose your job, speak freely about your beliefs, and even disagree with government policies. At the same time, citizen responsibilities include obeying the law, voting, and serving on juries. Responsible citizens also take part in their communities. This can mean joining the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of your child’s school, running for a position on the local school board, or volunteering to help at a polling station.

**Question 59: What is the minimum voting age in the United States? Answer : 18 is the minimum voting age.** For most of U.S. history, Americans had to be at least 21 years old to vote. By the 1970s, many people thought that if someone was old enough to fight in a war, he or she should be old enough to vote. So, in 1971 the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment changed the minimum voting age to 18.

**What holiday was celebrated for the first time by American colonists? Answer: Thanksgiving.**

The first Thanksgiving feast was held in Massachusetts in 1621. The Pilgrims who had traveled to this colony gave thanks for a successful fall harvest. They learned from local Native Americans, or Indians, which crops would grow and how best to grow them. The Indians’ lessons helped the Pilgrims grow enough food to survive the winter. In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt signed a bill that officially made the last Thursday of November Thanksgiving Day.

**What are some of the requirements to be eligible to become President? Answer: A candidate for President must be a native-born, not a naturalized citizen, be at least 35 years old, and have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years.** The writers of the Constitution wanted the President to be an experienced leader with a strong connection to the United States. The eligibility requirements try to make sure that this happens. In *Federalist Paper #64*, John Jay wrote that the President should be a man, “of whom the people have had time to form a judgment.” This, Jay explains, is one main reason for the eligibility requirements. The youngest person in American history to become President was Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt entered the White House when he was 42 years old.

The complete list of questions and answers can be found at <http://www.uscis.gov>, under education materials.



## Frequently Asked Questions at USCIS “How Do I...Bring My Child, Son Or Daughter to Live in the United States?”

This information is for United States (U.S.) citizens and lawful permanent residents who wish to bring their child(ren) to live permanently in the U.S.

### Overview of Immigration Process

A legal immigrant (or “lawful permanent resident”) is a foreign national who has been granted the privilege of living and working permanently in the United States. There is a three-step process for your child, son or daughter, to become a legal immigrant. You must obtain USCIS approval of an immigrant visa petition that you file for your child, son or daughter.

The State Department must then give your son or daughter an immigrant visa number, even if he or she is already in the United States. If you are a U.S. citizen and the child is both under 21 years of age and unmarried, a visa number is not required.

If your child, son or daughter, is outside the United States, he or she will be notified to go to the local U.S. consulate to complete the processing for an immigrant visa when one becomes available. If your child or son or daughter is legally in the U.S. when an immigrant visa number becomes available (or if one is not required), he or she may apply to adjust status to that of a lawful permanent resident using the Form I-485, Application to Register for Permanent Residence or Adjust Status.

### Who is Eligible to Be a Sponsor?

A **U.S. citizen** may petition for:

- A child (unmarried and under 21 years of age)
- An unmarried son or daughter (21 years of age or older)
- A married son or daughter of any age.

A U.S. citizen’s unmarried, minor child is considered an immediate relative, does not need a visa number, and is eligible to receive an immigrant visa immediately.

Otherwise, sons and daughters of U.S. citizens will be eligible for a visa when their priority date is listed on the Department of State Visa Bulletin.

If your unmarried, minor child was admitted or paroled into the U.S., he or she may file the Form I-485 at the time you file your Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative.

A lawful permanent resident may petition for:

- A child (unmarried and under 21 years of age)
- An unmarried son or daughter (21 years of age or older).

A lawful permanent resident may not petition for a married son or daughter. If you had children before you became a permanent resident and you did not immigrate as an immediate relative of a U.S. citizen, your unmarried, minor children may be eligible to receive following-to-join benefits. This means that you do not have to submit a separate Form I-130 for your children, and your children will not have to wait any extra time for a visa number to become available. See the Petitioning Procedure for more information on following-to join benefits at <http://www.uscis.gov>. Otherwise children of LPRs will be eligible for a visa when their priority date is listed on the Department of State Visa Bulletin.

### How Do I File the Petition?

To petition for your child, son or daughter to live in the United States permanently you should file a Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative. To find out how to file this petition, please see Petitioning Procedures at <http://www.uscis.gov>, which will help you identify what you need to do.

### How Can I Check the Status of My Visa Petition?

To check the status of your visa petition, you will need to contact the USCIS office that received it. Full instructions can be found at Finding the Status of Your Case at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

For more information on adjusting to permanent resident status, your child, son or daughter should refer to How Do I Become a Lawful Permanent Resident While in the United States? at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

Additional information is available on the <http://www.uscis.gov> homepage.

## VA Benefits for Filipino Veterans

Citizens of the Republic of the Philippines who serve today in the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible for VA benefits under the same criteria as other U.S. military veterans. However, eligibility for VA benefits for Filipino veterans who served in recognized units of the Philippine Armed Forces – especially during World War II – is not so clear-cut.

The Philippine Islands gained their independence from the United States in 1946 following a transition period that was interrupted by World War II. During World War II, Filipinos served in a variety of units, some coming under direct U.S. military control, others having no ties to the U.S. military, and still others falling somewhere in the middle. Federal law, international treaties and court cases have taken up the question of which VA benefits should be given to various groups of World War II Filipino veterans.

The United States recognizes service in four groups as qualifying for some VA benefits:

- **Regular, or “Old,” Philippine Scouts.** Regular Philippine Scouts, or "old scouts," were members of a small, regular component of the U.S. Army that was considered to be in regular active service. Originally formed in 1901, long before any formal plan for Philippine independence, the Regular Philippine Scouts were part of the U.S. Army throughout their existence.

- **Commonwealth Army of the Philippines.** Also known as the Philippine Commonwealth Army, these veterans were called into the service of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE), its members serving between July 26, 1941, and June 30, 1946, inclusive.

- **Guerrilla Service.** People in this group served as guerrillas in USAFFE in resistance units recognized by and cooperating with U.S. forces between April 20, 1942, and June 30, 1946, inclusive.

- **New Philippine Scouts.** New Philippine Scouts were Philippine citizens who served with the U.S. Armed Forces with the consent of the Philippine government and served between Oct. 6, 1945, and June 30, 1947, inclusive.

### Entitlement to VA Benefits

Filipino veterans who served with U.S. forces in the Regular Philippine Scouts before October 6, 1945, are entitled to all VA benefits under the same criteria as apply to any veteran of U.S. military service. Those benefits are paid at the full-dollar rate and their dependents and survivors are entitled to benefits under the eligibility rules common to the survivors of all U.S. veterans.

Veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, recognized guerrilla forces, and the New Philippine Scouts are entitled to compensation for service-connected disabilities. They are not entitled to disability pension for non-service-connected disabilities, nor are their survivors entitled to death pension.

Benefits for veterans of the Commonwealth Army, recognized guerrilla forces, and the New Philippine Scouts who live outside of the United States are paid at the rate of 50 cents for each dollar. However, these veterans who are residing in the United States receive full-dollar rate compensation

payments if they are either U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens.

VA pays burial benefits to the survivors of certain veterans at the full-dollar rate for veterans who were residing in the U.S. on the date of death. Those veterans must also have been either United States citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens. This covers only Commonwealth Army and recognized guerrilla service. Eligibility applies to deaths on or after Nov. 1, 2000, as this is based on legislation enacted in 2000. Burial benefits for these veterans also include interment in any national cemetery with available space, a burial flag, and a grave marker or headstone.

VA pays burial benefits to the survivors of New Philippine Scouts as well, at the full-dollar rate, if the veterans were lawfully residing in the United States on the date of death, and were United States citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens. Eligibility applies to death on or after Dec. 16, 2003, based on legislation enacted in 2003.

The survivors of Commonwealth Army, recognized guerrilla forces, and New Philippine Scouts veterans who are entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (for example, if the veteran died during military service) are paid at a rate of 50 cents for each dollar when residing in the Philippines. Survivors residing in the United States and who are either U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens are entitled to full-dollar payment.

### **Health Care Benefits**

Filipino Commonwealth Army Veterans, including those who were recognized by authority of the U.S. Army as belonging to organized Filipino guerilla forces, and new Philippine Scouts are eligible for VA health

care benefits in the U.S. on the same basis as U.S. veterans if they reside in the United States and are citizens or lawfully admitted for permanent residence. Old Philippine Scouts are eligible for VA health care benefits based upon their status as U.S. veterans.

In the Philippines, the Republic of the Philippines government provides medical care to eligible Filipino veterans. Filipino veterans are ineligible for VA health care treatment services in the Philippines although the VA does provide them examinations in connection with determining their eligibility for VA compensation and pension benefits. U.S. veterans with service-connected conditions are eligible for medical care for both service-connected and non-service-connected disabilities at the VA outpatient clinic in Manila. U.S. veterans there also are eligible for hospital care for service-connected disabilities, which is provided under VA contract.

### **Background**

The origins of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines are in the early 1900s when the United States assumed formal sovereignty over the Philippines. At that time, the United States was preparing for the Philippines to become a sovereign nation. Public Law 73-127, enacted in 1934, required the Commonwealth Army to respond to the call of the President of the United States under certain conditions. In fact, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered the Commonwealth Army to service on July 26, 1941, and it served with the USAFFE command throughout World War II.

Public Law 79-190, enacted in October 1945, authorized recruiting 50,000 "new" Philippine Scouts in anticipation of needing local occupational forces. President Truman acknowledged the contributions of the Philippine people who fought under the

umbrella of the USAFFE command to defend the Philippine Islands against occupation by the Japanese. He called for a study to determine the level of benefits appropriate to conditions in the Philippines. The reduced rate of benefits to veterans living there was based on the different economic conditions in the Philippines and the United States.

Current laws affecting these benefits date to congressional actions in 1946 that specified that the service of groups other than the Old Scouts would not be considered U.S. military service. VA officials considered that Filipino military service met the statutory definition of a U.S. veteran until Congress passed Public Laws 79-301 and 79-391 in 1946. Public Law 79-301, the First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, authorized a \$200 million appropriation to the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, with the provision that service in the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines should not be deemed to have been service in the military or naval forces of the United States. Public Law 79-391, the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act enacted in 1946, provided that service in the New Philippine Scouts was not deemed U.S. military service.

The U.S. government also gave the Philippine government grants of at least \$500,000 per year for more than 30 years, starting in the 1960s, to help the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC) in Quezon City upgrade its equipment and physical plant. In addition, VA provided a total of \$3 million in equipment funds to VMMC during the period from 2002 to 2005. A VA contract with the VMMC was expanded by legislation in 1963 permitting the center to care for non-service-connected conditions of Filipino and U.S. veterans.

Legislation in 1973 permitted VA itself to provide medical treatment of service-connected conditions (and non-service-connected illnesses in certain conditions) for Philippine Army and New Philippine Scout veterans. The half rates of compensation to most Filipino veterans living in the Philippines were intended to reflect that the Philippines had a lower cost of living than the United States. Since World War II, however, many Filipino veterans and their dependents have immigrated to this country.

Legislation enacted in 2000 provided the full-dollar rate compensation payments to veterans of the Commonwealth Army or recognized guerrilla forces residing in the U.S. if they are either U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens. Another 2000 law authorized payment of burial benefits on behalf of veterans in these groups where they had been U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens.

In 2003, Congress passed legislation that expanded compensation benefit payments to the full-dollar rate for New Philippine Scouts residing in the U.S. if they are either U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens. This legislation also expanded burial benefit payments to the full-dollar rate for New Philippine Scouts who at the time of death were residing in the U.S. and were U.S. citizens or lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens. It also expanded Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits to the full-dollar rate for survivors of veterans who served in the New Philippine Scouts, Philippine Commonwealth Army or recognized guerrilla forces, if the survivor is residing in the U.S. and is either a U.S. citizen or a legally admitted resident alien.

Further information can be found at <http://www.va.gov>



## PHILIPPINES

**April 27, 2007**

This Travel Warning updates information on the security situation and reminds Americans of the risks of travel in the Philippines. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for the Philippines issued June 16, 2006.

U.S. citizens contemplating travel to the Philippines should carefully consider the risks to their safety and security while there, including those due to terrorism. While travelers may encounter such threats anywhere in the Philippines, the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are of particular concern. Travelers should exercise extreme caution in both central and western Mindanao as well as in the Sulu Archipelago.

Kidnap for ransom gangs operate in the Philippines. In January 2007, one such gang abducted two U.S. citizen children outside their home in Tagum City, Davao Del Norte, in Mindanao. The New People's Army (NPA), another terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines, including in the northern island of Luzon. While it has not targeted westerners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities, and it often demands "revolutionary taxes."

Terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Jema'ah Islamiyah, and groups that have broken away from the more mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front or Moro National Liberation Front have carried out bombings resulting in deaths, injuries and property damage. Recent incidents have occurred in urbanized areas in Mindanao. On January 10, 2007, separate bombings in the cities of Kidapawan, Cotabato and General Santos killed seven people and injured 41. While these incidents do not appear to have targeted Westerners or Western interests, travelers should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas.

Many people who reside in or visit areas that face terrorist threats, such as in Mindanao, travel with their own security force, avoid an obvious presence, or both. In some areas of the Philippines, especially in Mindanao, visitors should avoid travel at night outside metropolitan areas. U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. When traveling in Mindanao, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profile, limit their length of stay, and exercise extreme caution.

The Department strongly encourages Americans in the Philippines to register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Manila through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. 63-2-528-6300. The Consular American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-522-3242 and the ACS web page is at <http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/rp1/wwwmain.html>.

Americans can obtain information on travel and security in the Philippines from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States; or 202-501-4444 abroad.

For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Consular Information Sheet for the Philippines and the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, located at <http://travel.state.gov/> to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Philippines.



## Avian Influenza

### How to Prepare for "Sheltering-In-Place"

Health professionals are concerned that the continued spread of a highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) virus among animals in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe has the potential to significantly threaten human health. If a virus such as H5N1 mutates and spreads easily from one person to another, avian influenza may break out globally. While there are no reports of *sustained* human-to-human transmission of avian influenza, the U.S. government and international health agencies are preparing for a possible pandemic.

Depending on the severity of a pandemic, commercial airlines might drastically curtail or even cease operations. Travel restrictions could also impede people from returning to the United States or fleeing to other countries. For these reasons, it may make more sense to "shelter-in-place" (i.e., stay home and practice "social distancing" to avoid contagion) for an appropriate period of time.

**United States Residents:** The Department of Health and Human Services suggests that US residents prepare two weeks of emergency supplies (food, water, medicines, etc.) in order to shelter-in-place during an influenza pandemic.

**American Citizens Abroad:** Due to varying conditions overseas, Americans abroad should evaluate their situation and prepare emergency supplies accordingly (non-perishable food, potable water, medicines, etc.) for the possibility of sheltering-in-place for at least two and up to twelve weeks. Water purification techniques such as boiling, filtering and/or adding chlorine to locally available rainwater, swimming pools, lakes, rivers and wells may replace the need to store large quantities of water.

What can you do on a daily basis? Cover your cough. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to eradicate viruses and bacteria or apply a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content when soap and water are not available. Stay home if you are sick. Vaccinate yourself against seasonal flu.

**Travel:** American citizens living in or traveling to countries with human or animal cases of H5N1 virus should consider the potential risks. Keep informed of the latest medical guidance and practical information and plan accordingly. Consult <http://www.travel.state.gov> for the latest tips on international travel.

**On-Line Resources:** Detailed information about suggested preparations, as well as planning checklists, are available on the U.S. government's one-stop web site on pandemic influenza ([www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)), also the World Health Organization ([www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/)) and the Centers for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) websites.

**WARDEN NOTICE**  
**Need for Caution in Central Mindanao**  
**April 19, 2007**

*THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD. THANK YOU.*

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The Embassy has information that a terrorist group may be planning to carry out bombing attacks in central Mindanao over the next several days. Although the information does not specify a particular location, U.S. citizens should carefully consider plans to visit central Mindanao.

U.S. citizens living and working in central Mindanao are urged to reassess their personal security and to keep a low profile, and should avoid public gathering places, including high-profile events, such as the "Palarong Pambansa" Games, which will take place in Koronadal City from April 22 - 28, 2007.

For additional information, Americans should refer to the Travel Warning for the Philippines, issued June 16, 2006, as well as the Consular Information Sheet for the Philippines dated June 19, 2006.

American citizens with questions or concerns may telephone the Embassy at (63)(2) 528-6300. In case of an emergency outside business hours, American citizens may reach the Embassy duty officer through the Embassy operator at (63)(2) 528-6300. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines. The Consular American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is (63)(2) 522-3242 and the ACS web page is at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>

**WARDEN MESSAGE**  
**January 09, 2007**

*THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD. THANK YOU.*

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**Posting Information on Safety and Security**

The U.S. Embassy would like to introduce a new link on its Web site that will make it easier for U.S. citizens to access information about:

- Demonstrations that may occur in the National Capital Region, or elsewhere in the country, and
- Weather warnings - approaching weather patterns that may affect the Philippines.
- Volcanic Activity / Earthquakes

The link to go to for Embassy Warden Messages on all three topics, as well as other Warden Messages involving Safety, Security, and Travel, is:

<http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/rp1/wwwha008.html>

Demonstrations: Political, or other, demonstrations can materialize on fairly short notice. If and when you do learn of a demonstration, please plan your travel accordingly: avoid crowds and exercise caution when traveling in the vicinity of a demonstration. As a reminder, even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. The Embassy will post demonstration alerts at

<http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/rp1/wwwha008.html>

Weather: From time to time we receive news reports of approaching tropical depressions, a typhoon, or other weather patterns that may pose a threat to lives or property. It may not always be practical to send out a separate warden message on an approaching weather pattern. You may wish to access a Web site, such as

<http://www.typhoon2000.ph/>

or the Web site for the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical & Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) at

<http://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/wb/wxfcst.html>

The Embassy will post weather warnings from time to time at

<http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/rp1/wwwha008.html>

Volcanic Activity / Earthquakes: We post warden messages from time to time, also at

<http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/rp1/wwwha008.html>

when an alert is raised by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology (PHILVOLCS). You will find Embassy warden messages at the link above. You may also receive information by accessing the PHILVOLCS Web site at

<http://www.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/>

or a U.S. Government Web site at <http://volcanoes.usgs.gov>.

During any emergency, it is a good idea to keep your transistor radio on to listen to the latest reports and any bulletins from Philippine Government agencies. A Severe Weather Bulletin is issued by PAGASA every six hours; i.e., at 5:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m., and 11:00 p.m.

Recommended AM band radio stations during an emergency are:

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation: DZMM 630-khz; and  
GMA Network Inc.: DZBB 594-khz

American citizens with questions or concerns may telephone the Embassy at (63)(2) 528-6300. In case of an emergency outside business hours, American citizens may reach the Embassy duty officer through the Embassy operator at (63)(2) 528-6300. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201

Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines. The Consular American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is (63)(2) 522-3242 and the general ACS web page is at <http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/rp1/www3004.html>

## WARDEN MESSAGE

August 4, 2006

*THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD. THANK YOU.*

### **U.S. Embassy Manila is Updating Its American Citizen Registration Database. Please Register Now!**

U.S. Embassy Manila is updating its American Citizen Registration database. If you have not registered yet using the State Department's new Internet Based Registration Service (IBRS), we encourage you to do so now! Typhoons, landslides, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can occur when least expected. In order to assist you in emergency situations the U.S. Embassy needs to know where you are and how to contact you. U.S. Embassy Manila strongly encourages all American citizens living or visiting in the Philippines to register immediately on-line.

Travel registration is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. Registration allows you to record information about your upcoming trip abroad that the Department of State can use to assist you in case of an emergency.

Millions of Americans travel abroad every year and encounter no difficulties. However, U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency. When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your travel, the U.S. embassy can be your source of assistance and information. By registering your trip, you help the embassy locate you when you might need them the most. Registration is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security.

U.S. citizens around the world who travel or reside abroad can access this site either through a link on [TRAVEL.STATE.GOV](http://TRAVEL.STATE.GOV) or directly at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. U.S. citizens and their families residing in the Philippines, whether temporarily or permanently, are invited to register and get acquainted with travel registration.

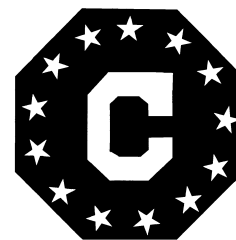
The new Internet travel registration service for American citizens allows U.S. citizens to register and update their contact information on the Internet at any time, making it easier for them to keep their information current. The site also provides registrants with up-to-date travel information customized to their unique travel agenda and itinerary. The data provided in the registration is secured behind Department of State firewalls, accessed only by cleared personnel in Embassies, Consulates, and the Department of State, and releasable only under the provisions of the Privacy Act.

If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about our travel registration website, please send an e-mail to [CAIbrs@state.gov](mailto:CAIbrs@state.gov). If you have specific questions about your registration with this Embassy please contact the U.S. Embassy at [ACSInfoManila@state.gov](mailto:ACSInfoManila@state.gov)



**U.S. Department of State**  
*Bureau of Consular Affairs*  
*Washington, DC 20520*

For recorded travel information, call 202-647-5225  
Internet Address: <http://travel.state.gov>



## Consular Information Sheet

### Philippines

Americans planning travel to *Philippines* should read [International Adoption Philippines](#), [International Parental Child Abduction Philippines](#), [Travel Warning for Philippines](#) available on the Department of State web site at <http://travel.state.gov>

**June 19, 2006**

**COUNTRY DESCRIPTION:** The Philippines is a developing nation with a democratic system of government, located in Southeast Asia. The archipelago consists of more than 7,000 islands, of which 880 are inhabited. The major island groupings are Luzon in the north, the Visayas in the center, and Mindanao in the south. Tourist facilities are available within population centers and the main tourist areas. English is widely spoken in the Philippines, and most signs are in English.

Read the Department of State [Background Notes](#) on the Philippines at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2794.htm> for additional information.

**ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS:** U.S. citizens may enter the Philippines without a visa upon presentation of their U.S. passport valid for at least six months after the date of entry into the Philippines, and a return ticket to the United States or an onward ticket to another country. Upon your arrival, immigration authorities will annotate your passport with an entry visa valid for 21 days. If you plan to stay longer than 21 days, you must apply for an extension at the Philippine Bureau of Immigration and Deportation's main office at Magallanes Drive; Intramuros, Manila, Philippines, or at any of its provincial offices (<http://www.immigration.gov.ph>).

Persons who overstay their visas are subject to fines and detention by Philippine immigration authorities. American citizens are urged to remain aware of their visa status while in the Philippines and to follow immigration laws and regulations strictly. Travelers departing the country from international airports must pay a Passenger Service Charge in Philippine Pesos. For further information on entry/exit requirements, please contact the Embassy of the Philippines at: 1600 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (telephone: (202) 467-9300), or one of the Philippine consulates in the United States (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) or via the Internet at <http://www.philippineembassy-usa.org>.

Special requirements exist for the entry of unaccompanied minors. In an effort to prevent international child abduction, the Philippine government requires that a waiver of exclusion be obtained from a Philippine Embassy or Consulate or from the Bureau of Immigration and Detention in Manila for a child under 15 years of age who plans to enter the Philippines unaccompanied by either a parent or legal guardian prior to the child's entry into the Philippines.

See our [Foreign Entry Requirements brochure](#) for more information on the Philippines and other countries.

Find more information about [Entry and Exit Requirements](#) pertaining to dual nationality and the prevention of international child abduction. Please refer to our [Customs Information](#) to learn more about customs regulations.

**SAFETY/SECURITY:** The Department urges Americans who choose to travel to the Philippines to observe vigilant personal security precautions, and remain aware of the continued potential for terrorist attacks, including those against U.S. citizens. Americans are also encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy. The Department warns against all but essential travel throughout the country in light of heightened threats to Westerners. Explosive devices have been placed in shopping malls, on public transportation, at airports and port facilities, in places of worship, and in other public areas resulting in numerous casualties and deaths. No area of the Philippines is immune from the possibility of a terrorist attack, although the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are particularly affected. One of three bombs that exploded on February 14, 2005 was planted on a bus near an upscale commercial district of Makati, Metro Manila, killing four people. In December 2005, the Embassy closed its public services for two days in response to threat information. Travelers should be aware that since security has increased at official U.S. facilities, terrorists could seek softer targets. Such targets could include but are not limited to places where Americans and other Westerners might live, congregate, shop or visit, including hotels, beach resorts, clubs, restaurants, shopping centers, businesses, housing compounds, transportation systems, places of worship, schools, or public recreation events.

The Philippine government has been engaged in negotiations with Communist and Muslim insurgent groups. Nonetheless, terrorist activity and armed banditry in certain areas of the Philippines still pose security concerns. The Communist Party of the Philippines and its terrorist military arm, the New People's Army, operate throughout the country and have issued public threats against U.S. citizens and interests in the Philippines.

In Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, kidnappings, bombings, violence, and insurgent activity make travel hazardous in many areas. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which the U.S. Government has designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization, has kidnapped several Americans and other foreign tourists since April 2000. Some were freed after payment of substantial ransoms, some escaped or were rescued by military action, and some were killed. Other kidnapping gangs operate in the same general area and have abducted a number of foreigners for ransom.

Operatives of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which the U.S. Government has also designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization, are present in the Philippines as well. JI is an extremist group linked to al-Qaeda and other regional terrorist groups and has cells operating throughout Southeast Asia. Extremist groups in the region have demonstrated a capability to carry out transnational attacks in locations where Westerners congregate. Terrorist groups do not distinguish between official and civilian targets.

U.S. citizens and interests may be at increased risk from terrorist actions by foreign or domestic extremist groups in the Philippines. There are periodic reports of plans for possible terrorist acts aimed at U.S. Government facilities or personnel, public and private institutions, and transportation carriers. The U.S. Embassy takes all such threats seriously. The State Department reminds all Americans traveling or living abroad of the need to remain vigilant with regard to personal security issues and to always follow basic and important security countermeasures: do not establish a pattern or routine in movement and travel; vary the times and routes taken to the extent possible; maintain a low profile; and immediately report any unusual activity, to include possible surveillance, to the Philippine Police and the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Embassy.

In February 2006, the President of the Philippines declared a State of National Emergency due to reported political destabilization efforts by elements in the military, political opposition, and Communist Party of the Philippines after reports of a coup attempt. While the President lifted the State of National

Emergency after one week, American citizens should avoid areas of new political demonstrations and exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. Americans residing or traveling in the Philippines should also always remain aware of their surroundings, listen to news reports, and ensure that travel documents are current.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

Travelers are also encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Manila at tel. (63) (2) 528-6300 for an update of the current security situation, especially if planning to travel outside the Metro Manila area.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's pamphlet [A Safe Trip Abroad](#).

**CRIME INFORMATION:** As in many of the major metropolitan areas in the United States, crime is a serious concern in Metro Manila. As a rule of thumb, Americans should exercise good judgment and remain aware of their surroundings. Reports of confidence games, pick-pocketing, and credit card fraud are common. Be wary of unknown individuals who attempt to befriend you, especially just after you have arrived in country. A number of recent robberies and assaults involving the "date rape drug" (known locally as Ativan) have occurred; the drug is generally administered to unwitting male and female visitors via food or drink. It is best not to accept food, drink, or rides in private vehicles from strangers, even if they appear legitimate. There have been several kidnappings and violent assaults of foreigners in the Metro Manila area. There have also been reports of gunmen robbing foreign passengers in vehicles traveling to and from the international airport.

Taxis are the recommended form of public transportation. However, the following safeguards are important: do not enter a taxi if it has already accepted another passenger; and, request that the meter be used. If the driver is unwilling to comply with your requests, it is best to wait for another cab. It is also a good idea to make a mental note of the license plate number should there be a problem. When driving in the city, make certain that the doors are locked and the windows rolled up. All other forms of public transportation, such as the light rail system, buses, and "jeepneys" should be avoided for both safety and security reasons.

Visitors should also be vigilant when using credit cards. One common form of credit card fraud involves the illicit use of an electronic device to retrieve and record information, including the PIN, from the card's magnetic strip. The information is then used to make unauthorized purchases. To limit your vulnerability to this scam, never let your card out of your sight.

A continuing problem is the commercial scam or sting that attempts to sell or to seek negotiation of fraudulent U.S. securities. Visitors and residents should be wary when presented with supposed Federal Reserve Notes or U.S. securities for sale or negotiation. For further information, consult the Federal Reserve System's Web site at: <http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/SRLETTERS/2003/sr0314.htm>.

**INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME:** Americans should report immediately the loss or theft of a U.S. passport in the Philippines to the local police and to the U.S. Embassy in Manila. If you are the victim of other crimes while in the Philippines, in addition to reporting to local police, Americans may

contact the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit, which can for example, provide lists of doctors or lawyers, contact family members or friends, and explain how to transfer funds from the U.S. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of Philippine authorities, U.S. consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and find an attorney if needed.

See our information for [Victims of Crime](#).

The Philippines has a victim compensation program to provide financial compensation to victims of violent or personal crime and of unjust imprisonment. Information may be obtained from the Philippine Department of Justice at 011-632-521-6264 or via the Internet at <http://www.doj.gov.ph/>.

**MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION:** Adequate medical care is available in major cities in the Philippines, but even the best hospitals may not meet the standards of medical care, sanitation, and facilities provided by hospitals in the United States. Medical care is limited in rural and more remote areas. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees in cash at the time of admission.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost several or even tens of thousands of dollars. A list of doctors and medical facilities in the Philippines is available on the web page of the U.S. Embassy in Manila at <http://philippines.usembassy.gov>.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, please consult the World Health Organization's website at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

**MEDICAL INSURANCE:** The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Please see our information on [medical insurance overseas](#).

**TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS:** While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Philippines is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel within the Philippine archipelago is possible by boat, plane, bus, or car. Few tourists rent a car to drive, as the road system is crowded and drivers are undisciplined. Driving off the national highways and paved roads is particularly dangerous, especially at night, and should be avoided. To avoid overcrowded or unsafe transport, exercise caution in planning travel by older, inter-island ferryboats, or other public conveyances.

For specific information concerning Philippine driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. at tel. (202) 467-9300 or one of the Philippine consulates in the United State (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) or via the Internet at <http://www.philippineembassy-usa.org>. Please see also related information from the Philippine Department of Tourism at <http://www.tourism.gov.ph> and <http://www.dotpcvc.gov.ph>.

Please refer to our [Road Safety](#) page for more information.

**AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT:** The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Philippine Government as being in compliance with ICAO international aviation safety standards for oversight of the Philippines' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at [http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs\\_initiatives/oversight/iasa](http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa).

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:**

**Marriage in the Philippines:** The Philippine Government requires foreigners who wish to marry in the Philippines to obtain from the U.S. Embassy a "Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" before filing an application for a marriage license. Because there is no national register of marriages in the United States, the U.S. Embassy cannot provide such a certification. As a result, the Philippine Government will accept an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" in its place. Americans may execute this affidavit at the U.S. Embassy in Manila Monday-Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., except for Philippine or American holidays. The American must present his/her U.S. passport. There is a fee of \$30.00 or its peso equivalent for the affidavit. Philippine authorities will not accept any substitute document issued in the United States. Before traveling to the Philippines to be married, U.S. military personnel should contact their personnel office regarding Department of Defense joint service regulations.

Execution of the affidavit by a U.S. consular officer is a notarial act and the consular officer is authorized by U.S. law to refuse to perform the service if the document will be used for a purpose patently unlawful, improper, or inimical to the best interests of the United States (see 22 C.F.R. section 92.9b). Entering into a marriage contract for the principal purpose of facilitating immigration to the United States for an alien is an unlawful act, and the U.S. Code provides penalties for individuals who commit perjury in an affidavit taken by a consular officer. Relationship fraud is a persistent problem in the Philippines, and it is not uncommon for Filipinos to enter into marriages with Americans solely for immigration purposes. Relationships developed via correspondence, particularly those begun on the Internet, are particularly susceptible to manipulation.

**The Marriage Application Process:** Once an American citizen has obtained from the U.S. Embassy an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage," he/she may file an application for a marriage license at the office of the Philippine Civil Registrar in the town or city where one of the parties is a resident. The U.S. citizen applicant must present: (a) the affidavit; (b) divorce decree(s) or death certificate(s), if applicable (required to verify civil status and legal capacity to contract marriage); (c) his/her U.S. passport; and (d) documentation regarding parental consent or advice, if applicable. (Persons aged 18 to 21 must have written parental consent to marry in the Philippines; those aged 22 to 24 must have received parental advice. Philippine law prohibits marriage for persons under the age of 18.) A judge, a minister, or other person authorized by the Philippine Government can perform the marriage.

Marriage to a U.S. citizen confers neither citizenship nor an automatic eligibility for entry to the United States. A foreign spouse requires an immigrant visa to live in the United States. Questions about filing a petition to bring a foreign spouse to the United States may be directed to the nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service office, to the U.S. Department of State's Visa Office (telephone: (202) 663-1225) or, while in the Philippines, to the U.S. Embassy's Immigrant Visa Unit at <http://philippines.usembassy.gov>.

**Disaster Preparedness:** The Philippines is a volcano-, typhoon- and earthquake-prone country. From May to December, typhoons and flash floods often occur. Flooding can cause road delays and cut off bridges. Typhoons in the vicinity of the Philippines can interrupt air and sea links within the country. Volcanic activity is frequent, and periodically the Philippine Government announces alerts for specific volcanoes. Updated information on volcanoes in the Philippines is available at the following Web sites: <http://www.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/> and <http://volcanoes.usgs.gov>. Earthquakes can also occur throughout the country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from



the Philippines National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) at <http://ndcc.gov.ph/ndcc/> and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at <http://www.fema.gov>.

**Customs:** Philippine customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Philippines of items such as firearms and currency. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, D.C. or one of the Philippine consulates in the United States (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) for specific information regarding customs requirements. Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available in the Philippines; transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. A current list of countries with serious problems in this regard can be found at [http://www.ustr.gov/Document\\_Library/Reports\\_Publications/2004/2004\\_Special\\_301/Section\\_Index.htm](http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Reports_Publications/2004/2004_Special_301/Section_Index.htm)  
I. Please see our information on [customs regulations](#).

**CRIMINAL PENALTIES:** While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Philippines laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Philippines are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Capital punishment is possible for certain drug-related crimes. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see our information on [Criminal Penalties](#).

Under the Protect Act of April 2003, it is a crime, prosecutable in the United States, for a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, to travel to a foreign country to engage in criminal sexual activity or to engage in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign country. It is important to note that under the new legislation, the act of illicit sexual conduct is sufficient to violate the law - the intent to travel for the purpose of engaging in the criminal sexual activity does not need to be proven. For purposes of the Protect Act, illicit sexual conduct means: (1) a sexual act with a person under 18 years of age that would be illegal in the United States or (2) any commercial sex act in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18.

The Philippine Bureau of Immigration arrests several Americans each year on immigration charges of "undesirability," sometimes based solely on complaints arising from personal or business disputes in the Philippines. Frequently, these detainees cannot be deported and/or released from custody until substantial fines are paid and any underlying criminal charges are resolved – a process that sometimes takes months or even years.

Fraud, swindling, and "bad debts" are also serious criminal offenses in the Philippines, as is the illegal recruitment of Philippine citizens for employment overseas. Several Americans are currently serving lengthy prison sentences for illegal recruitment activities. The Philippine Government also has strict laws against the possession of firearms, and several foreigners have been sentenced to life imprisonment for bringing firearms into the country. Americans who are arrested overseas should immediately ask to contact a U.S. Embassy representative.

**CHILDREN'S ISSUES:** Under Philippine law, the mother and father of a child are held to exercise parental control jointly, and child custody cases are considered civil disputes. Parental abduction is not a crime. The Philippines is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For specific information on child custody cases in the Philippines, please consult the web page of the U.S. Embassy in Manila at <http://philippines.usembassy.gov>.

For information on international adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the [Office of Children's Issues](#) website.

**REGISTRATION/EMBASSY AND CONSULAR AGENCY LOCATION:** The Department encourages Americans living in or visiting the Philippines to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Philippines. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of an emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. (63) (2) 528-6300. The Consular American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is (63)(2) 522-3242 and the ACS web page is at <http://philippines.usembassy.gov>.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Cebu provides limited services for U.S. citizens. The Consular Agency address is: Waterfront Hotel, Lahug, Cebu City, tel. (63) (32) 231-1261.

The Virtual Consulate Davao (<http://www.usvirtualconsulatedavao.org.ph>) provides targeted information and services of interest to Americans residing in or traveling to Davao. The Virtual Consulate supports email correspondence for queries from American citizens. Regularly scheduled "chat" sessions also allow Americans to interact in real time with the American Citizens Services personnel at the U.S. Embassy.

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This replaces the Consular Information Sheet dated July 26, 2005, to update entry/exit requirements, safety and security, crime information, aviation safety oversight and criminal penalties and Registration/Embassy and Consular Agency Location.