

U.S. Embassy Kabul - Standard Operating Procedures for Disposition of Remains

The Consular Section at U.S. Embassy Kabul has responsibility for all civilian U.S. Citizen deaths in Afghanistan. This includes all contractors to the U.S. government, with the exception of those individuals serving under U.S. Chief of Mission Authority, whose deaths are handled by the Management Counselor.

Note: All U.S. military deaths are handled by the U.S. Department of Defense. Coordination between the U.S. Embassy's Military Liaison Office and Consular Section is critical during military incidents, as they often involve a mix of civilian and military personnel.

Death Certificate

The hospital, doctor or police station of jurisdiction is responsible for providing a certificate of death for private U.S. citizens that pass away in Afghanistan. This document should also be acknowledged (signed/sealed) by the Ministry of Public Health and will serve as the basis for the issuance of a Consular Report of Death of an American Citizen Abroad (CRODA) prepared by the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.

For U.S. citizens affiliated with the U.S. government (i.e. as a permanent employee or contractor), their remains may, with prior authorization, be sent by military aircraft to Dover Air Force Base, where doctors perform an autopsy and issue a preliminary certificate of death. This document provides the basis for the CRODA.

Autopsy Services

The only place in Kabul that can provide autopsy services is the Kabul University Morgue - contact number: +93 (020) 2500 316. Please note that local post-mortem/autopsy services do not meet international standards.

Disposition

Upon notification of the Next of Kin (NOK), several options are available for the disposition of remains:

- cremation;
- local burial;
- repatriation by commercial aircraft; and
- repatriation by military aircraft (*only* for USG personnel or contractors if previously authorized).

Cremation: Hindu's Daramsal

The only cremation facilities available in Kabul are at the Hindu Daramsal in Kart-e-Parwan or in Tank-e-Loghar. The cost is approximately \$100 to \$250 for firewood. An urn for the ashes must be provided to the cremation facility. Traditional urns are not readily available in Kabul, but a metal urn may be procured locally for less than \$10. Contact information: +93 (070) 6300 288.

Note: The following documents are required for the cremation:

- Letter from the NOK specifically authorizing the Hindu Crematorium to cremate the remains;
- Letter of identification of the deceased and statement of no objection to the cremation from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul;
- Certified copy of the Death Certificate; and
- Certified copy of the deceased's passport.
- Additional police requirements (only occasionally required if the Embassy letter is not sufficient - i.e. if the cause of death is unknown or there are suspicious circumstances involved)

Upon completion of the cremation, a Certificate of Cremation will be issued. This document is required to accompany the ashes if shipped internationally to the United States.

Local Burial:

Qhabr-e-Ghuorah Cemetery (Qal-e-Fatullah)

The only available location for local burial of non-Muslim U.S. Citizens is at the Qhabr-e-Ghuorah cemetery in Kabul. Local staff must notify the caretaker of the cemetery in person, and he will make arrangements for a grave to be prepared. The cost for this service is approximately \$100. Arrangements for a headstone or grave marker must be made separately. Consular staff may need to coordinate with the UK Embassy in Kabul for this option, as that Embassy has accepted some responsibility for the maintenance of this property; there are many British citizens and soldiers buried there.

For local burials of Muslim U.S. Citizens, public cemeteries can be identified by the American Citizens Services Unit of the Consular Section. Locally-based staff can facilitate purchasing a coffin and hiring laborers and a mullah to perform the ceremony (please note that the Consular Section does not provide funds for this purpose).

Repatriation by Commercial Aircraft: If the NOK wants the body to be transported to the U.S., the RMSI Company can transport the body to the U.S. RMSI's contact information is:

Emergency numbers: +93 798 444 888 or +93 786 444 888

Secondary Number: +93 700 840 160

A copy of the death certificate should accompany the body. If the body transits India, the canceled U.S. passport of the deceased should accompany the remains.

Repatriation by Military Transport:

Bagram Mortuary Affairs

If a civilian American Citizen is serving in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), their remains can be transported via military aircraft to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware (the designated Port of Entry). Flights depart Afghanistan every couple of days for repatriation.