

# ACS Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 2

April 2009



## Message from the ACS Chief

My tenure as American Citizen Services (ACS) Chief at the U.S. Embassy is quickly drawing to a close. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the American expatriate community and to the people of the Philippines for your warm hospitality over these past four years.

At the cornerstone of consular work in the Philippines is the warm friendship and mutual respect that Filipinos and Americans have for each other. Over 150,000 American citizens have chosen the Philippines as their home and another 350,000 travel here annually as tourists. I am proud to have been a part of the dedicated team providing consular services to this large and diverse American citizen community.

The American Citizen Services section manages one of the largest **consular outreach programs** in the world. Each month we travel to cities throughout the Philippines providing consular and benefits services to over 5000 Americans. Our Angeles and Olongapo outreaches routinely attract 300 customers at each venue! My heartfelt thanks to all those American citizen volunteers, who have helped publicize and organize these successful events.

This year I had the pleasure of honoring American citizen volunteers at our **Consular Warden Conference** held in September 2008. For those of you not familiar with the concept, "wardens" are U.S. citizens who volunteer their assistance to the American expatriate community in a foreign country. Over 90 wardens attended our Consular Warden Conference, which

provided essential citizenship, benefits and disaster preparedness information. Our U.S. wardens left the conference armed with practical information and tools that they could use to save lives in the event of an emergency or natural disaster.

In addition to these activities, we continue to assist American citizens with medical, financial and immigration difficulties. We are also one of the largest passport processing embassies in the world. Recent technological advances allow for high-speed passport processing in the U.S., enabling you to receive your passports in two to three weeks time. The Department of State's **Internet Based Registration System (IBRS)** at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/> now makes registering with the Embassy hassle free.

It is with great sadness that I leave in June to assume my new position with the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Michael Garrote, the Chief of the Visa Section at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, will be my successor.

Consul Linda E. Daetwyler  
Chief  
American Citizen Services



Above: 2008 ACS Warden Conference  
Left: Angeles City Outreach April 2009

# ACS Newsletter

## contents

Message from the ACS Chief	1
Social Security Benefits for Children	3
Toddler Safety Tips	4
HEALTHbites: Swine Influenza and You	6
A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety	8
NO to Child Pornography	11
Tips to Prevent Abduction & Kidnapping	12
World War II Filipino Veterans: Equity Compensation Fund	13
Top 10 Travel Tips from CBP.gov	14
Pandemic Flu Fact Sheet	15
Philippine Country Specific Information	18
Travel Warning: Philippines	22
Worldwide Caution	23
ACS Contact Information/ 2009 Holiday Schedule	27



3



4



6



8



11



12



13



14

# Social Security Benefits for Children

**If a child is getting benefits based on your work, there are important things you should know about his or her benefits:**

## When a child reaches age 18

- A child's benefits stop the month before the child reaches age 18, unless the child is either disabled or is a full-time elementary or secondary school student.
- About five months before the child's 18th birthday, the person receiving the child's benefits will get a form explaining how benefits can continue.
- A child whose benefits stopped at age 18 can have them started again if he or she becomes disabled before reaching age 22 or becomes a full-time elementary or secondary school student before reaching age 19.

## If a child is disabled

- A child can continue to receive benefits after age 18 if he or she has a disability. The child also may qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability payments. Call Social Security Administration (SSA) for more information.

## If a child age 18 is a student

- A child can receive benefits until age 19 if he or she continues to be a full-time elementary or secondary school student. When your child's 19th birthday occurs during a school term, benefits can be continued until completion of the term, or for two months following the 19th birthday, whichever comes first.
- Social Security should be notified immediately if the student drops out of school, changes from full-time to part-time attendance, is expelled or



suspended, or changes schools. We also should be told if the student is paid by his or her employer for attending school.

- SSA sends each student a form at the start and end of the school year. It is important that the form is filled out and returned. Benefits could be stopped if we the form is not received.
- A student can keep receiving benefits during a vacation period of four months or less if he or she plans to go back to school full time at the end of the vacation.
- A student who stops attending school generally can receive benefits again if he or she returns to school full-time before age 19. The student needs to contact SSA to reapply for benefits.



For further information,  
contact SSA Manila at:

Telephone Number: (02) 301-2000  
ext. 6302 or 2669

Fax Number: (02) 522-1514

Email Address:  
[ssad.varo.manila@ssa.gov](mailto:ssad.varo.manila@ssa.gov)

# Toddler Safety Tips

As young children get older, they start to crawl and walk around the home. Parents can guard against possible dangers by conducting a home safety evaluation from the child's point of view. The Home Safety Council recommends that parents look at each room from their child's eye-level and use the following tips to make homes safer for young children:



- Install sturdy baby gates at the tops and bottoms of stairs.
- Install child safety locks on cabinets to safely store matches and lighters, chemicals, cleaners, medicines, cosmetics, and other toxic and/or caustic products.
- Purchase cleaners, household chemicals, medications and other potentially hazardous products with child resistant packaging.
- Post the **Philippine National Poison Control Emergency Hotline (02-524-1078)** and other emergency numbers next to every phone.
- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home and near sleeping areas.
- If your home has a pool, surround it on all sides with installed fencing and a self-latching gate.
- Never leave a child unattended near standing water, even for a moment.
- Locate cribs, beds, chairs and other furniture away from windows.
- Install window locks or safety guards on above-ground windows. Be sure they have a quick-release mechanism in case of fire.
- Keep window treatment cords and sashes tied and stored up high overhead; purchase new mini-blinds that meet safety standards.
- Store matches, lighters, candles and other fire tools out of children's sight and reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

## Prevent Poisoning

- Take all medicines and medical supplies out of purses,

pockets and drawers. Put them in a cabinet with a child safety lock.

- Have child safety caps on all chemicals, medications and cleaning products.
- Lock all dangerous items and products in a cabinet. Cosmetics (make-up) can be poison too.
- Keep medicines and cleaning products in their original containers with the original labels intact.
- Store all dangerous products away from food and drinks. Be especially aware of products with fruit shown on the labels, which could be seen as being edible.
- Keep each family member's medicines in a separate place, so they don't get mixed up. Carefully measure doses and track medicine given/received.
- Be safe. Throw away medicines if you don't use them.

## Prevent Burns and Scalds

- Test the water before your children get in the tub.
- When children are in the tub, stay close enough to touch them.
- Use safety caps to keep children from putting things into electrical outlets.
- Keep children away from the range when you are cooking.
- Lock up all matches and lighters.

Continued on page 5...

# Toddler Safety Tips

Continued from page 4...

- Only use candles when an adult is around. Blow out candles if you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Gasoline can catch fire with only a tiny spark. Store it in a special safety can. Never bring it indoors, even in small amounts.

## Prevent Choking and Other Dangers

- Keep all plastic wrapping or packing materials away from young children.
- Keep pillows, toys and blankets out of the crib.
- Don't hang anything with strings or ribbons over cribs.
- If your window has a blind, keep the chords tied up high. Window blind cords should not have a loop. Cut any loop in two pieces.
- Children can choke on small items, such as buttons, coins, jewelry and small toys. If it fits in a toilet paper roll, it is not safe for little children.
- Read the label of toys before you let your child play with them. Make sure your child is old enough to use that toy. The label will tell the safe age.

## Prevent Drowning

- Drowning can happen very fast. Most of the time you will not hear someone drowning.
- Drowning can happen in any standing water, such as a swimming pool, a pond or a ditch.
- Stay within arm's reach of young children when they are in the tub.
- Don't let other children baby-sit children around water.
- Have toilet lid locks and use them if small children live in or visit your home.
- Store large buckets turned over, so water cannot collect inside them.

## Prevent Falls

- Use safety gates at the tops and bottoms of

stairs. Use a safety gate to prevent falls from balconies and decks.

- Have window guards on upper windows.
- Place cribs, beds and other furniture away from windows.
- Put away ladders and step stools after use.
- Cover the ground under playground equipment with a thick layer (9-12 inches) of mulch, wood chips or other safety material.

## Child Passenger Safety

As children grow, how they sit in your car, truck or SUV should change.

Save your child from injury or death by observing all four steps:

1. **Rear-Facing Seats**—For the best possible protection keep infants in the back seat, in rear-facing child safety seats, as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until a minimum of age 1 and at least 20 pounds.
2. **Forward-Facing Seats**—When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum age 1 and at least 20 pounds) they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, in the back seat, until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).
3. **Booster seats**—Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats, in the back seat, until the vehicle seat belts fit properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall).
4. **Seat Belts**—When children outgrow their booster seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they can use adult seat belt in the back seat, if it fits properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).

## IMPORTANT EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS:

**Emergency Services** - 112

**Emergency Police** - 117

**Ambulance: Lifeline** - 169-11

**Bantay Bata** - 163

**National Poison Control Hotline** - 524-1078

**Council for the Welfare of Children**- 781-10-39/ 781-10-35/ 781-10-37/ 740-88-64/ 740-88-63

**Child Rights Center, Commission on Human Rights**- 927-40-33

**Task Force on Child Protection, Department of Justice**- 523-84-81

**Special Committee on the Protection of Children, Department of Justice**- 525-16-80; 24-HOUR HOTLINES (632) 722-2353 / (632) 722-9587

Sources:

- [www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org)
- [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)
- [www.gov.ph](http://www.gov.ph)



## HEALTHbites

## Swine Influenza and You



### Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

**No.** Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

### Is this Swine Influenza virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

### What are the signs and symptoms of Swine Influenza in people?

The symptoms of Swine Influenza in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with Swine Influenza. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with Swine Influenza infection in people. Like seasonal flu, Swine Influenza may cause a worsening of underlying

Swine Influenza (Swine Influenza) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get Swine Influenza, but human infections can and do happen. Swine Influenza viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

chronic medical conditions.

### How does Swine Influenza spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

### What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health. Get

plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

### Are there medicines to treat Swine Influenza?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body.

If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

### How long can an infected person spread Swine Influenza to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

## HUMAN SWINE INFLUENZA

For further information about Human Swine Influenza, please consult the Department of State information on Swine Influenza at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/pa/pa\\_pandemic.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_pandemic.html), the United States Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> or the World Health Organization website at <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>.

Continued from page 6...

### What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

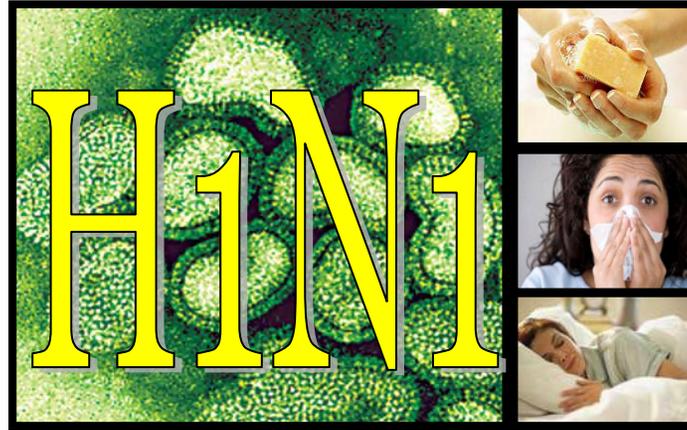
### How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, door-knobs, and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

### What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against Swine Influenza. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.



Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from get-

ting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

### What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

### What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting.

# Swine Influenza and You



# A Parent's Guide to INTERNET SAFETY

## What Are The Signs That Your Child Might Be At Risk On-line?

### Your child spends large amounts of time on-line, especially at night.

Most children that fall victim to computer-sex offenders spend large amounts of time on-line, particularly in chat rooms. They may go on-line after dinner and on the weekends. They may be latchkey kids whose parents have told them to stay at home after school. They go on-line to chat with friends, make new friends, pass time, and sometimes look for sexually explicit information. While much of the knowledge and experience gained may be valuable, parents should consider monitoring the amount of time spent on-line.

Children on-line are at the greatest risk during the evening hours. While offenders are on-line around the clock, most work during the day and spend their evenings on-line trying to locate and lure children or seeking pornography.

### You find pornography on your child's computer.

Pornography is often used in the sexual victimization of children. Sex offenders often supply their potential victims with pornography as a means of opening sexual discussions and for seduction. Child pornography may be used to show the child victim that sex between children and adults is "normal." Parents should be conscious of the fact that a child may hide the pornographic files on diskettes from them. This may be especially true if the computer is used by other family members.

While on-line computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they hit the road exploring the information highway. There are individuals who attempt to sexually exploit children through the use of on-line services and the Internet. Some of these individuals gradually seduce their targets through the use of attention, affection, kindness, and even gifts. These individuals are often willing to devote considerable amounts of time, money, and energy in this process. They listen to and empathize with the problems of children. They will be aware of the latest music, hobbies, and interests of children.

These individuals attempt to gradually lower children's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual context and content into their conversations.

There are other individuals, however, who immediately engage in sexually explicit conversation with children. Some offenders primarily collect and trade child-pornographic images, while others seek face-to-face meetings with children via on-line contacts. It is important for parents to understand that children can be indirectly victimized through conversation, i.e. "chat," as well as the transfer of sexually explicit information and material. Computer-sex offenders may also be evaluating children they come in contact with on-line for future face-to-face contact and direct victimization. Parents and children should remember that a computer-sex offender can be any age or sex the person does not have to fit the caricature of a dirty, unkempt, older man wearing a raincoat to be someone who could harm a child.

Children, especially adolescents, are sometimes interested in and curious about sexuality and sexually explicit material. They may be moving away from the total control of parents and seeking to establish new relationships outside their family. Because they may be curious, children/adolescents sometimes use their on-line access to actively seek out such materials and individuals. Sex offenders targeting children will use and exploit these characteristics and needs. Some adolescent children may also be attracted to and lured by on-line offenders closer to their age who, although not technically child molesters, may be dangerous. Nevertheless, they have been seduced and manipulated by a clever offender and do not fully understand or recognize the potential danger of these contacts.

### Your child receives phone calls from men you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.

While talking to a child victim on-line is a thrill for a computer-sex offender, it can be very cumbersome. Most want to talk to the children on the telephone. They often engage in "phone sex" with the children and often seek to set up an actual meeting for real sex. While a child may be hesitant to give out his/her home phone number, the computer-sex offenders will give out theirs. With Caller ID, they can readily find out the child's phone number. Some computer-sex offenders have even obtained toll-free 800 numbers, so that their potential victims can call them without their parents finding out. Others will tell the child to call collect. Both of these methods result in the computer-sex offender being able to find out the child's phone number.

### Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.

As part of the seduction process, it is common for offenders to send letters, photographs, and all manner of gifts to their potential victims. Computer-sex offenders have even sent plane tickets in order for the child to travel across the country to meet them.

### Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.

A child looking at pornographic images or having sexually explicit conversations does not want you to see it on the screen.

Continued on page 9...



# Internet Safety

Should any of the following situations arise in your household, via the Internet or on-line service, you should immediately contact your local or state law enforcement agency, the FBI, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

1. Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography;
2. Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age;
3. Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone that knows your child is under the age of 18.

If one of these scenarios occurs, keep the computer turned off in order to preserve any evidence for future law enforcement use. Unless directed to do so by the law enforcement agency, you should not attempt to copy any of the images and/or text found on the computer.

Continued from page 8...

### Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.

Computer-sex offenders will work very hard at driving a wedge between a child and their family or at exploiting their relationship. They will accentuate any minor problems at home that the child might have. Children may also become withdrawn after sexual victimization.

### Your child is using an on-line account belonging to someone else.

Even if you don't subscribe to an on-line service or Internet service, your child may meet an offender while on-line at a friend's house or the library. Most computers come preloaded with on-line and/or Internet software. Computer-sex offenders will sometimes provide potential victims with a computer account for communications with them.

### What Should You Do If You Suspect Your Child Is Communicating With A Sexual Predator On-line?

- Consider talking openly with your child about your suspicions. Tell them about the dangers of computer-sex offenders.
- Review what is on your child's computer. If you don't know how, ask a friend, coworker, relative, or other knowledgeable person. Pornography or any kind of sexual communication can be a warning sign.
- Use the Caller ID service to determine who is calling your child. Most telephone companies that offer Caller ID also offer a service that allows you to block your number from appearing on someone else's Caller ID. Telephone companies also offer an additional service feature that rejects incoming calls that you block.

This rejection feature prevents computer-sex offenders or anyone else from calling your home anonymously.

- Devices can be purchased that show telephone numbers that have been dialed from your home phone. Additionally, the last number called from your home phone can be retrieved provided that the telephone is equipped with a redial feature. You will also need a telephone pager to complete this retrieval. This is done using a numeric-display pager and another phone that is on the same line as the first phone with the redial feature. Using the two phones and the pager, a call is placed from the second phone to the pager. When the paging terminal beeps for you to enter a telephone number, you press the redial button on the first (or suspect) phone. The last number called from that phone will then be displayed on the pager.

- Monitor your child's access to all types of live electronic communications (i.e., chat rooms, instant messages, Internet Relay Chat, etc.), and monitor your child's e-mail. Computer-sex offenders almost always meet potential victims via chat rooms. After meeting a child on-line, they will continue to communicate electronically often via e-mail.

### What Can You Do To Minimize The Chances of An On-line Exploiter Victimizing Your Child?

- Communicate, and talk to your child about sexual victimization and potential on-line danger.
- Spend time with your children on-line. Have them teach you about their favorite on-line destinations.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. It is much more difficult for a computer-sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or another member of the household.
- Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider and/or blocking software. While electronic chat can be a great place for children to make new friends and discuss various topics of interest, it is also prowled by computer-sex offenders. Use of chat rooms, in particular, should be heavily monitored. While parents should utilize these mechanisms, they should not totally rely on them.

Continued on page 10...



**There are dangers in every part of our society. By educating your children to these dangers and taking appropriate steps to protect them, they can benefit from the wealth of information now available on-line.**

**Continued from page 9...**

- Always maintain access to your child's on-line account and randomly check his/her e-mail. Be aware that your child could be contacted through the U.S. Mail. Be up front with your child about your access and reasons why.
- Teach your child the responsible use of the resources on-line. There is much more to the on-line experience than chat rooms.
- Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends. These are all places, outside your normal supervision, where your child could encounter an on-line predator.
- Understand, even if your child was a willing participant in any form of sexual exploitation, that he/she is not at fault and is the victim. The offender always bears the complete responsibility for his or her actions.
- Instruct your children:
  - ◆ to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met on-line;
  - ◆ to never upload (post) pictures of themselves onto the Internet or on-line service to people they do not personally know;
  - ◆ to never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number;
  - ◆ to never download pictures from an unknown source, as there is a good chance there could be sexually explicit images;
  - ◆ to never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing;
  - ◆ that whatever they are told on-line may or may not be true.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**My child has received an e-mail advertising for a pornographic website, what should I do?**

Generally, advertising for an adult, pornographic website that is sent to an e-mail address does not violate federal law or the current laws of most states. In some states it may be a violation of law if the sender knows the recipient is under the age of 18. Such advertising can be reported to your service provider and, if known, the service provider of the originator. It can also be reported to your state and federal legislators, so they can be made aware of the extent of the problem.

**Is any service safer than the others?**

Sex offenders have contacted children via most of the major on-line services and the Internet. The most important factors in keeping your child safe on-line are the utilization of appropriate blocking software and/or parental controls, along with open, honest discussions with your child, monitoring his/her on-line activity, and following the tips in this pamphlet.

**Should I just forbid my child from going on-line?**

There are dangers in every part of our society. By educating your children to these dangers and taking appropriate steps to protect them, they can benefit from the wealth of information now available on-line.

Source: [www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee](http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee)

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children—**1-800-THE-LOST** (1-800-843-5678) or access [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

# NO

## to Child Pornography

*"Each year an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 human beings are bought, sold, or forced across the world's borders [2003 U.S. State Department estimate]. Among them are hundreds of thousands of teenage girls, and others as young as 5, who fall victim to the sex trade.*

*There's a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable. The victims of [the] sex trade see little of life before they see the very worst of life, an underground of brutality and lonely fear. Those who create these victims and profit from their suffering must be severely punished. Those who patronize this industry debase themselves and deepen the misery of others."*

*- President Bush, addressing the U.N. General Assembly, September 23, 2003*

Every year, thousands of people visit the Philippines to enjoy the beautiful beaches and the local culture. Unfortunately, not everyone comes simply to enjoy the scenery. The rate of child sex tourism is increasing at an alarming speed. In 2004, Congress took new action against the evils of child sex tourism. 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 with the intent 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. Intent to travel for that reason 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 U.S. Government is working very hard to eliminate child sex tourism all over the world. In a little over a year, the Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DHS-ICE) has charged four child sex tourists that committed crimes here in the Philippines and is actively investigating several more. If you have any information, please contact the Immigration and Customs Attaché or American Citizen Services at 301-2000.

### **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 engage in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18, whether or not the U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident alien intended to engage in such illicit sexual conduct prior to going abroad. For purposes of the PROTECT Act, illicit sexual conduct includes any commercial sex act in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18. The law defines a commercial sex act as any sex act, on account of which anything of value is given to or received by a person under the age of 18.

Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998, it is a crime to use the mail or any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, including the Internet, to transmit information about a minor under the age of 16 for criminal sexual purposes that include, among other things, the production of child pornography. This same law makes it a crime to use any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, including the Internet, to transport obscene materials to minors under the age of 16.

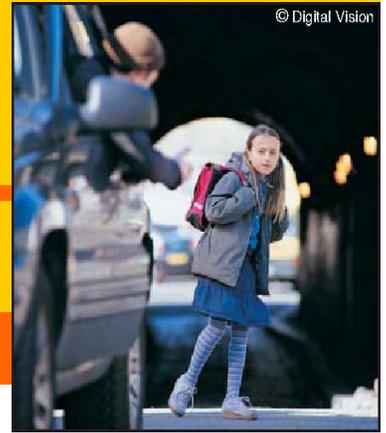
**N**OTE: There are Philippine laws that contain provisions aimed to protect children from pornography, including Article 201 of the Revised Penal Code; R.A. No. 7610 otherwise known as 'An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination, and for Other Purposes;' and R.A. No. 9208 or the 'Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act.'



# Tips to Prevent Abduction and Kidnapping



**Kidnap-for-ransom gangs operate in the Philippines and sometimes target foreigners, as well as Filipino-Americans. While Americans are not typically targeted for kidnapping, kidnappings and violent assaults do occur.**



While the U.S. Embassy, Manila, does not have information that shows any trend in child kidnappings, this would be a good time for American citizens to review their personal security practices and ensure they and their family members develop prudent security routines such as:

- ✓ Varying routes and times – making yourself unpredictable will make you a much harder target for criminals.
- ✓ Being aware of your surroundings – criminals often watch their intended victim's home or routines to gather information which they use to plan their crime.
- ✓ People conducting surveillance tend to stand out and look out of place in their surroundings. If you see someone suspicious, report it immediately to the nearest Philippine law enforcement agency.
- ✓ Watch for vehicles that appear to be following you or that show up suspiciously in areas you visit or transit.
- ✓ Keep doors and windows secured both at your residence and in your vehicle.

- ✓ You should know the background of employees who work with your family members and in your homes.
- ✓ Brief your staff not to provide any information about your family to anyone unless at your request. Tell your staff to immediately notify you if a stranger has requested information about you or your family.
- ✓ Maintain a low profile by not drawing attention to yourself or your family and make sure you and your family members are aware of each others' daily plans and know how to contact each other.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is a good resource for parents to help protect children. For more information on Abduction and Kidnapping Prevention Tips for Parents and Guardians please visit [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com). Other sources of information on this subject are found at [http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi\\_0199-3245409/Kidnap-avoidance-at-home-and.html](http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-3245409/Kidnap-avoidance-at-home-and.html); and [www.amberalertwisconsin.org/content/parenttips.asp](http://www.amberalertwisconsin.org/content/parenttips.asp).

# World War II Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund



The President of the United States signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 on February 17, 2009, authorizing the release of a one-time, lump-sum payment to eligible World War II (WWII) Philippine veterans. These payments are to be made through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from a \$198 million appropriation established for this purpose. Applying for this benefit will not affect other existing Veterans benefits.

## Q: Who is eligible for the new benefit, a one-time payment authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009?

- Persons who served before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States;
- Members of the organized guerrilla forces under commanders appointed, designated, or subsequently recognized by the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, or other competent authority in the Army of the United States;
- Persons who served in the Philippine Scouts under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945.
- To be eligible for the new benefit, service members in each of the three categories above must have been discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable.

## Q: How do I apply for this benefit?

Veterans do not need to appear in-person. VA is now accepting claims from Filipino WWII veterans and will continue to accept claims until February 16, 2010. The claim form, VA Form 21-4138 Statement in Support of Claim (Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund) can be obtained by calling or visiting your nearest VA Regional Office. In the Philippines, the VA Regional Office is located at the U.S. Embassy in Manila.

The forms are also available at the VA website, <http://www.va.gov> or at the U.S. Embassy Manila website at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>.

Application forms from Filipino WWII veterans filing their claim can be mailed from within the Philippines with required supporting documents, and should be sent to:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
1131 Roxas Blvd.  
0930 Manila, Philippines  
Claims from spouses, widows and children of Filipino WWII veterans cannot be accepted.

## Q: What information or evidence do I need to submit with my application?

Filipino WW II veterans wishing to submit a claim for this benefit should provide the following items to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (if applicable):

- Two forms of identification such as a driver's license, birth certificate, Senior Citizen ID, Bureau of Post ID, Voter ID Card;
- Copies of any military discharge documents showing service in one of the three qualifying types of service mentioned in question [#1 above](#).
- Your Philippines Veterans Affairs Office claim number;
- Your Philippines Veterans Affairs bank account number;
- Your U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs claim number; and
- U.S. citizens should bring your U.S. passport if appearing in person.

## Q: Where do I apply for this benefit?

Veterans can submit a claim by mail or in-person to any VA Regional Office. All claims will be processed at the Manila VA Regional Office.

Veterans can also mail the application directly to the Manila VA Regional Office at:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
1131 Roxas Blvd.  
0930 Manila, Philippines

Additionally, veterans may make an appointment to visit the Manila VA Regional Office by dialing (632) 528-2500 within metro Manila or by dialing toll free 1-800-1888-5252 from outside Metro

Manila but within the Philippines.

## Q: How long do I have to file a claim?

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs must receive all claims no later than February 16, 2010, which is one year from the date of enactment of the legislation, which is February 17, 2009.

## Q: How much will I receive?

Eligible veterans who are not United States citizens will receive a one-time payment of \$9,000.

Eligible veterans who are United States citizens will receive a one-time payment of \$15,000.

## Q: I am a U.S. citizen, but reside in the Philippines. Will that affect the amount of my payment?

No. The amount of the payment you are eligible to receive is determined by your citizenship, not by your residence.

## Q: My late husband was a veteran who served during WWII. May I receive this benefit as his widow?

Once an eligible veteran files a claim before February 17, 2010, a surviving spouse can claim the benefit if the veteran passes away before the benefit is paid.

## Q: My husband was a U.S. citizen who filed a claim for this benefit but died before receiving payment. I am not a U.S. citizen. Will I receive the \$15,000 he was eligible to receive?

Yes. The amount of the payment is determined by the citizenship of the eligible veteran, not by the citizenship of the surviving spouse.

## Q: Will receipt of this benefit impact or reduce any other U.S. Government assistance or benefits I receive?

No. This is an additional benefit for those eligible and qualified WWII veterans. It will not change or affect benefits an individual may be receiving under any other Federal or federally assisted program.

## Q: May I apply for or continue to receive other U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits?

Yes. This is an additional benefit for those eligible and qualified Filipino WWII veterans.

## Q: When will I receive the payment?

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is working actively to implement this new public law to ensure all eligible veterans receive their rightful benefits as soon as possible. Claims are now being accepted, and information regarding the actual release of payments will be provided as it becomes available.

# Top 10 Travel Tips

10. Have all the required travel documents for the countries you're visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the U.S. Passports are required for re-entry to the U.S. by air. Visit [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for destination information.
9. Declare everything you are bringing in from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. This merchandise is also subject to U.S. duty fees and other restrictions.
8. Be cautious when buying something from a street vendor. Keep in mind that the merchandise may be counterfeit and/or unsafe and you may have to surrender it to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when you get home.
7. Know that things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts are eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they're not.
6. Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (such as ivory, tortoise shell products, absinthe, and counterfeit items) and restricted merchandise.
5. Be aware that many foreign-made medications are not FDA-approved, and you cannot bring them into the U.S. Also, when travelling abroad, bring only the amount of medication you'll need during the trip.
4. Don't bring any Cuban-made products into the U.S., no matter where you purchased them.
3. Don't bring any food into the U.S. without first checking to see if it is permitted. Also, any and all live birds and bird products, whether for personal or commercial use, may be restricted and/or quarantined.
2. Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches, and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
1. Read CBP's helpful brochure, "Know Before You Go," before traveling. Print copies may be requested online, or view the web version at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) under the travel section.

For more information, visit: <http://cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/>



## Fact Sheet: Pandemic Influenza/Avian Influenza (H5N1)

The U.S. Government remains concerned about the possibility of an influenza pandemic that will affect Americans abroad. This fact sheet offers advice on measures Americans can take to prepare for and cope with a possible pandemic. It also includes information on the U. S. Government's efforts to plan for and respond to such an event.

### U.S. Government Pandemic Policy for Americans Abroad

The U.S. Government recognizes that in a pandemic, a variety of factors may lead Americans abroad to stay in the country they are residing in or visiting. Some may choose to remain in country to avoid mass transit, public gatherings or other situations that could increase their exposure to the virus. Others may be forced to remain in country, due to disruptions in air travel, quarantines or closed borders. Consequently, it is current U.S. Government policy for all overseas employees under Chief of Mission authority, and their accompanying dependents, to plan for the possibility that they will be remaining in country during a pandemic. Information for both official and private Americans on how to prepare for this possibility is contained in the flyer [Remain in Country During a Pandemic \(http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health\\_3096.html\)](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_3096.html), which urges Americans to maintain adequate provisions for a pandemic wave or waves that could last from 2 to 12 weeks.

Once the World Health Organization (WHO) confirms a severe pandemic – defined as the emergence of a sustained, efficient human-to-human transmission of a new influenza virus that kills at least 1-2% of the people it infects – American citizens (including non-emergency government employees, their dependent family members and private citizens) residing or traveling overseas should consider returning to the United States while commercial travel options (air, land or sea) are still available. Americans will be permitted to re-enter the United States, although the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (HHS/CDC) may quarantine or isolate incoming travelers, depending on their health status and whether they are traveling from or through an area affected by pandemic influenza.

At such a time, non-emergency U.S. Government employees and all U.S. Government dependents affected by a severe pandemic will be allowed to return to the United States for the duration of the pandemic. Employees who return to the United States will be expected to work during the pandemic unless they take leave. Private American citizens abroad should make an informed decision: either remain in country, as noted above, to wait out the pandemic or return to the United States while this option still exists. Any American, whether overseas in a private capacity or employed by the U.S. Government, or a dependent of a U.S. Government employee, who chooses not to return to the United States via commercial means while still available, might have to remain in country for the duration of the pandemic if transportation is disrupted or borders close. Americans should be aware that only in cases of a breakdown in civil order within a country will the U.S. Government consider non-combatant evacuation operations.

Those who feel they would be at greater risk by remaining abroad during a pandemic, or who prefer returning to the United States to access American medical and health care services, may opt to return to the United States. Individuals with chronic medical conditions identified by the WHO and CDC may be at higher risk of suffering complications from influenza and should consider returning to the United States early at the onset of a pandemic or of postponing travel during a pandemic. Those at high risk may include: pregnant women; adults and children who have chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus); adults and children who have immunosuppressant (including that caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus); and adults and children who have any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders or other neuromuscular disorders) that can compromise respiratory function.

Due to legal restrictions and a lack of sufficient resources, the U.S. Department of State is not in a position to provide private American citizens traveling or living abroad with medications or supplies, or medical treatment, in the event of a pandemic. Therefore, private American citizens should carefully weigh the risks of remaining in country versus the risks of traveling, keeping in mind the potential benefits of returning to the United States. Returning to the United States could provide Americans with greater access to antiviral medications, respirators, face masks and pandemic vaccine. However, traveling also could increase one's potential for exposure to the virus and even result in being stranded in a third country if flights are diverted.

U.S. Government assistance to private American citizens who are forced or choose to remain in country would be limited to traditional consular protection, i.e., communicating with family and friends, monitoring quarantine/detention conditions as permitted by local health authorities, arranging for transfers of funds or granting temporary subsistence loans, and providing information regarding the availability of medical care (to be paid for by the individual). Private American citizens should be aware that the U.S. Government cannot demand their immediate release if they have been detained or quarantined abroad in accordance with local public health and legal authorities.

### Current Situation - Avian Influenza A (H5N1)

At this writing, countries continue to report outbreaks of avian influenza A (H5N1), commonly referred to as "bird flu," in their domestic and wild bird populations. In addition, countries have reported, on a very limited basis, H5N1 infections in other wild and domestic animals. A small number of confirmed cases of H5N1 among humans have been reported, approximately 60% of which have resulted in death. More information is available on the WHO web site at [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/country/en](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/en). Please refer to this website for the most current information on countries affected by H5N1 and the number of confirmed human cases and deaths.

# Fact Sheet: Pandemic Influenza/Avian Influenza (H5N1)

(continued)

The vast majority of reported human infections have resulted from direct contact with avian influenza A (H5N1)-infected poultry. Although there is evidence to suggest very limited, human-to-human transmission, primarily in family groups involving close exposure to a critically ill member, there is no evidence to suggest the virus can be easily transmitted from human to human in a sustained manner at the present time. HHS/CDC, the WHO, and the U.S. Department of State are nonetheless concerned about the potential for the virus to adapt or mutate into a strain that could cause a human influenza pandemic, and are working closely with all U.S. Government agencies to prepare for the possibility of pandemic influenza. Information on the U.S. Government's overall planning and response efforts is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## Travel and Avian Influenza A

The U.S. Department of State, HHS/CDC and the WHO have not issued any health precautions, travel alerts or warnings for areas infected with avian influenza. During a pandemic, these agencies, as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation ([www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)), will provide regular situational updates and appropriate guidance to the American public. The information will be tailored toward specific geographic regions, depending on how the virus evolves and on local conditions, including regional variations in the mortality rate and the availability of medical care.

HHS/CDC advises American citizens traveling to or living abroad in countries affected by avian influenza to avoid:

- poultry farms;
- contact with animals in live food markets;
- any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces or fluids from poultry or other animals; and
- consumption of poultry and eggs that are not thoroughly cooked.

American citizens traveling to or living in countries affected by avian influenza should consider the potential risks and keep informed about the latest medical guidance in order to make appropriate plans. Specific HHS/CDC travel information relating to H5N1, including preventive measures, is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>. WHO guidance related to avian influenza is available at [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/).

Areas of known H5N1 outbreaks in poultry have been quarantined by governments in those countries within 24 hours, restricting (if not preventing) movement into and out of the affected area. If the virus evolves into a form that can be easily transmitted from human to human in a sustainable manner, governments will likely respond by imposing public health measures that restrict domestic and international movement. This would limit the U.S. Government's ability to assist Americans in those countries. During a pandemic, Americans abroad might expect such measures to be implemented very quickly.

Americans who are planning travel to a country that has reported outbreaks of avian influenza A (H5N1), or who are concerned about avian influenza, are advised to monitor the HHS/CDC and WHO websites for up-to-date information. Additional country information can be obtained from the U.S. Department of State's [Country Specific Information](#) and [Embassy and Consulate](#) web pages. You may also call the U.S. Department of State's toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, or if calling from overseas, 1-202-501-4444.

## Prevention, Response and Treatment – Taking Charge

The avian influenza type A (H5N1) virus is continually evolving and cannot, at present, easily pass from human to human in a sustainable manner. A vaccine for humans that effectively prevents infection with the avian influenza type A (H5N1) virus is not yet readily available. Experts anticipate a four- to six-month lag between identification of a pandemic influenza virus and commercial development and distribution of an effective vaccine.

HHS/CDC research shows that antiviral medications such as oseltamivir and zanamivir (commonly known by their brand names of Tamiflu® and Relenza®) may be effective in treating avian influenza type A (H5N1) if taken early in the infection, although their efficacy will not be known with certainty until a pandemic strain emerges and is analyzed. As with all prescription medications, side effects may occur, and rare but serious side effects have been reported with both oseltamivir and zanamivir. For more information, Americans should consult their healthcare provider or see the package insert approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Food and Drug Administration (HHS/FDA). Expired medications must not be taken.

These influenza antiviral medications can be obtained by prescription from a healthcare provider in the United States. If such medications or adequate medical treatment are not readily available at an overseas location or travel destination(s), Americans should consider discussing with their personal physicians the advisability of obtaining an advance supply of appropriate medication for a trip or period of stay overseas. More information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/content/Diseases.aspx#influ>.

# Fact Sheet: Pandemic Influenza/Avian Influenza (H5N1)

## (continued)

The U.S. Department of State has pre-positioned supplies of antiviral medications at its embassies and consulates worldwide for eligible U.S. Government employees and their dependents. However, due to legal restrictions and a lack of sufficient resources, the U.S. Department of State is not in a position to provide private American citizens traveling or living abroad with medications or supplies, or medical treatment, in the event of a pandemic.

Americans should also be aware of the potential health risk posed by counterfeit drugs, including those represented as oseltamivir or zanamivir, by scam artists who sell products on the Internet or in countries with lax regulations governing the production and distribution of pharmaceutical products. For more information on counterfeit drugs, please visit HHS/FDA's web site at [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/).

Complete planning guidance on how private citizens can prepare to remain in country during a pandemic, including stocking food, water and medical supplies, is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/index.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/index.html). In addition, the guidance suggests that individuals who need to enter crowded areas should consider use of a face mask for protection against others who are coughing and to limit the wearers' ability to cough on others. However, there are no definitive studies regarding the effectiveness of face masks in preventing the transmission of the flu virus. Should Americans choose or be forced to remain in a country experiencing a pandemic, they should limit exposure to the virus (through such measures as avoiding mass transit and public gatherings) and take the hygienic precautions outlined at the website cited above.

### **CDC Contact Information**

Public Inquiries:

English (888) 246-2675

Spanish (888) 246-2857

TTY (866) 874-2646

Mon-Fri 8am-11pm EST

Sat-Sun 10am-8pm EST

Address:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd.

Atlanta, GA 30333

USA (404) 639-3311

### **Traveler's Website**

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>

### **WHO Liaison Office in Washington, DC**

Contact Information:

Telephone: (202) 974-3787

### **WHO Website**

<http://www.who.int/en/>

Address:

WHO Liaison Office

1889 F Street, NW, Suite 369

Washington, DC 20006 USA

September 2008



# Philippines

## Country Specific Information

February 06, 2009

**COUNTRY DESCRIPTION:** The Philippines is an emerging economy with a democratic system of government. Located in South-east Asia, the archipelago consists of more than 7,000 islands, of which over 800 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 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 arrival, immigration authorities will annotate the traveler's passport with an entry visa valid for 21 days. If the traveler plans to stay longer than 21 days, he/she 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.

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 strictly follow immigration laws and regulations. Travelers departing the country from international airports must pay a Passenger Service Charge in Philippine Pesos. Visit the Embassy of the Philippines web site for the most current visa information.

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.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the prevention of [international child abduction](#) can be found on our web site. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information](#) sheet.

**SAFETY AND SECURITY:** 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. For further information regarding the continuing threats due to terrorist and insurgent activities in the southern Philippines, see the Philippine Travel Warning.

Terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, 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. In November 2007, a bombing outside the House of Representatives in Metro Manila resulted in a number of deaths and injuries to bystanders. On January 3, 2008, a bomb exploded at a Cotabato City disco pub, killing one and injuring eight. The central and western areas of Mindanao have also experienced bombings targeting bus terminals and public buildings. While those responsible do not appear to have targeted foreigners, travelers should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public 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. Some foreigners who reside in or visit western and central Mindanao hire their own private security personnel.

Kidnap-for-ransom gangs operate in the Philippines and sometimes target foreigners, as well as Filipino-Americans. The New People's Army (NPA), a terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines, including in the northern island of Luzon. While it has not targeted foreigners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities, and it often demands "revolutionary taxes."

Americans in the Philippines are advised to monitor local news broadcasts and consider the level of preventive security when visiting public places, especially when choosing hotels, restaurants, beaches, entertainment venues, and recreation sites.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State's, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#), as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#), can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. 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 Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



# Philippines

## Country Specific Information (continued)

**CRIME:** As in many of the major metropolitan areas in the United States, crime is a significant 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, internet scams and credit/ATM card fraud are common. American citizens should be wary of unknown individuals who attempt to befriend them, especially just after arrival in country. A number of robberies and assaults involving the "date rape drug" (known locally as Ativan) have occurred; the drug is generally administered to unwitting male or female victims via food or drink. It is best not to accept food, drink, or rides in private vehicles from strangers, even if they appear legitimate. While Americans are not typically targeted for kidnapping, kidnappings and violent assaults do occur in the Metro Manila area.

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.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at <http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm>.

**INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME:** The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. 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 011-632-536-0447.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Philippines is 117.

Please see our information on [Victims of Crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

**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 those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the 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. Engaging in 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](#).

**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. American citizens 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 citizen must present his/her U.S. passport. The fee for the affidavit is \$30.00 or its peso equivalent. 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.



## Philippines

# Country Specific Information (continued)

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.

**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. Updated information on typhoons is available at <http://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph>. Volcanic activity is frequent, and periodically the Philippine Government announces alerts for specific volcanoes. Updated information on volcanoes in the Philippines is available from the U.S. Geological Survey. Earthquakes can also occur throughout the country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available from the Philippines National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

**Customs:** Philippine customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Philippines of items such as currency and firearms. The transport of ammunition is illegal and Philippine officials have arrested Americans for having even a small number of bullet shells in their luggage. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, DC 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. Please see our [Customs Information](#).

**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 and doctors in the United States. Medical care is limited in rural and more remote areas.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost several or even tens of thousands of dollars. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees in cash at the time of admission. In some cases, public and private hospitals have withheld lifesaving medicines and treatments for non-payment of bills. Hospitals also frequently refuse to discharge patients or release important medical documents until the bill has been paid in full. A list of doctors and medical facilities in the Philippines is available from the U.S. Embassy in Manila.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors. Americans applying for residency status in the Philippines can be excluded based on this illness. Please verify this information with the Embassy of the Philippines at 1600 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, tel 202-467-9300 before you travel.

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 the CDC's web site. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith/en>.



# Philippines

## Country Specific Information (continued)

---

**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 whether 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 cars 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 fer-boats, 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, DC at tel. (202) 467-9300 or one of the Philippine consulates in the United State (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco). Please see also related information from the Philippine Department of Tourism and the Philippine Convention and Visitors Corporation.

Please refer to our [Road Safety](#) page for more information. Visit the web site of the country's national authority responsible for road safety.

**AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT:** The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Philippines' Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of the Philippines' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at [http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs\\_initiatives/oversight/iasa](http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa).

**CHILDREN'S ISSUES:** For information see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on [intercountry adoption](#) and [international parental child abduction](#).

**REGISTRATION / EMBASSY LOCATION:** Americans living or traveling in the Philippines are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the [State Department's travel registration web site](#) so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Philippines. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. (63) (2) 301-2000. The American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is (63) (2) 301-2017. You may also visit the ACS web page.

\*\*\*

This replaces the Country Specific Information for the Philippines dated June 17, 2008 to update sections on Safety and Security, Medical Facilities and Health Information, and Special Circumstances.

# Travel Warning

United States Department of State  
*Bureau of Consular Affairs*

---

## PHILIPPINES

**January 27, 2009**

The State Department warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to the southern Philippine islands of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago and urges extreme caution if traveling there. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated February 13, 2008, and updates information on continuing threats due to terrorist and insurgent activities.

Travelers should exercise extreme caution if traveling in the central and western portions of the island of Mindanao, as well as in the islands of the Sulu Archipelago. Regional terrorist groups have carried out bombings resulting in injuries and death. Since August 2008, there have been sporadic clashes between lawless groups and the Philippine Armed Forces in the Mindanao provinces of North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte, as well as the Sulu Archipelago. Kidnap for ransom gangs are active and have targeted foreigners. U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. Travelers to these areas should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas. Some foreigners who reside in or visit Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago hire their own security.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and interests throughout the world. The [Worldwide Caution](#), [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/pa/pa\\_1161.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1161.html), reminds Americans that terrorism can occur anywhere.

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. 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-301-2017 and the ACS web page is at <http://manila.usembassy.gov/www3004.html>.

For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's [Country Specific Information for the Philippines](#) and the [Worldwide Caution](#), located at <http://travel.state.gov/>. American citizens may also obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 from the United States and Canada, or 202-501-4444 from overseas.

# Worldwide Caution

United States Department of State  
*Bureau of Consular Affairs*  
*Washington, DC 20520*

---

## February 2, 2009

This Worldwide Caution updates information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and interests throughout the world. In some countries, the worldwide recession has contributed to political and economic instability and social unrest. The armed conflict between Israeli forces and Hamas in Gaza, which began in December 2008, raised tensions and sparked demonstrations throughout the world. U.S. citizens and others were killed in recent terrorist attacks in India and Pakistan. American citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This replaces the Worldwide Caution dated July 16, 2008 to provide updated information on security threats and terrorist activities worldwide.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests overseas. Americans are reminded that demonstrations and rioting can occur with little or no warning. Current information suggests that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. interests in multiple regions, including Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, and bombings. The September 2006 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Syria and the March 2006 bombing near the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan illustrate the continuing desire of extremists to strike American targets.

Extremists may elect to use conventional or non-conventional weapons, and target both official and private interests. Examples of such targets include high-profile sporting events, residential areas, business offices, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, public areas, and locales where Americans gather in large numbers, including during holidays. Terrorists attacked two hotels, a railway station, restaurant, hospital, and other locations in Mumbai, India, frequented by Westerners on November 26, 2008. Over 100 persons are believed to have been killed, including six Americans, and hundreds were injured. On September 20, terrorist bombed the Islamabad Marriott Hotel killing two U.S. Department of Defense employees and one Department of State contractor, whose remains are still unaccounted for. One private American sustained minor injuries. A July 9, 2008, terrorist attack on Turkish police guarding the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul, Turkey, killed three police officers and wounded other police personnel. On March 15, 2008, a bomb at an Italian restaurant in Islamabad, Pakistan, killed two and injured twelve, including five Americans. Also on March 15, two bombs exploded at the CS Pattani Hotel in southern Thailand, killing two and injuring thirteen.

Americans are reminded of the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems. Bombs exploded near city buses in Tripoli, Lebanon, on August 13 and September 29, 2008, killing twenty-one people. Other examples include multiple anti-personnel mine detonations on passenger buses in June 2008 in Sri Lanka, multiple terrorist attacks on trains in India in 2006, the July 2005 London Underground bombings, and the March 2004 train attacks in Madrid. Extremists also may select aviation and maritime services as possible targets, such as the August 2006 plot against aircraft in London, or the December 2006 bomb at Madrid's Barajas International Airport. In June 2007, a vehicle was driven into the main terminal at Glasgow International Airport and burst into flames, but the bomb failed to detonate.

## The Middle East and North Africa

Credible information indicates terrorist groups seek to continue attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. Terrorist actions may include bombings, hijackings, hostage taking, kidnappings, and assassinations. While conventional weapons such as explosive devices are a more immediate threat in many areas, use of non-conventional weapons, including chemical or biological agents, must be considered a possible threat. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Increased security at official U.S. facilities has led terrorists and their

## Worldwide Caution (continued)

United States Department of State  
*Bureau of Consular Affairs*  
*Washington, DC 20520*

---

sympathizers to seek softer targets such as public transportation, residential areas, and public areas where people congregate, including restaurants, hotels, clubs, and shopping areas.

On September 17, 2008, armed terrorists attacked the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen, killing several Yemeni personnel, one embassy security guard, and a few individuals waiting to gain entry to the embassy. On March 18, 2008, a mortar attack on the U.S. Embassy in Yemen injured several Yemeni citizens in the vicinity. On January 15, 2008, a roadside explosion in Beirut, Lebanon killed three Lebanese and injured an American citizen. On December 11, 2007, two vehicle-borne explosive devices were detonated at the UN headquarters in Algiers and the Algerian Constitutional Council. Three suicide bomb attacks in July and September of 2007 in Algeria killed more than 80 people. In July 2007, suspected al-Qaida operatives carried out a vehicle-borne explosive device attack on tourists at the Bilquis Temple in Yemen, killing eight Spanish tourists and their two Yemeni drivers. There were a series of bombings in Morocco in March and April 2007, two of which occurred simultaneously outside the U.S. Consulate General and the private American Language Center in Casablanca. Additionally, an attack took place on the American International School in Gaza in April 2007. These events underscore the intent of terrorist entities to target facilities perceived to cater to Westerners.

Potential targets are not limited to those companies or establishments with overt U.S. ties. For instance, terrorists may target movie theaters, liquor stores, bars, casinos, or any similar type of establishment, regardless of whether they are owned and operated by host country nationals. Due to varying degrees of security at all such locations, Americans should be particularly vigilant when visiting these establishments.

The violence in Iraq and conflict between Palestinians and Israelis has the potential to produce demonstrations and unrest throughout the region. The armed conflict between Israeli forces and Hamas in Gaza, which began in December 2008, raised tensions and sparked demonstrations throughout the world. The Department of State continues to warn of the possibility for violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests in the region. Anti-American violence could include possible terrorist actions against aviation, ground transportation, and maritime interests, specifically in the Middle East, including the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa.

The Department is concerned that extremists may be planning to carry out attacks against Westerners and oil workers on the Arabian Peninsula. Armed attacks targeting foreign nationals in Saudi Arabia that resulted in many deaths and injuries, including U.S. citizens, appear to have been preceded by extensive surveillance. Tourist destinations in Egypt frequented by Westerners were attacked in April 2006 resulting in many deaths and injuries, including Americans. Extremists may be surveilling Westerners, particularly at hotels, housing areas, and rental car facilities. Potential targets may include U.S. contractors, particularly those related to military interests. Financial or economic venues of value also could be considered as possible targets; the failed attack on the Abqaiq oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia in late February 2006 and the September 2006 attack on oil facilities in Yemen are examples.

### East Africa

A number of al-Qaida operatives and other extremists are believed to be operating in and around East Africa. As a result of the conflict in Somalia, some of these individuals may seek to relocate elsewhere in the region. Americans considering travel to the region and those already there should review their plans carefully, remain vigilant with regard to their personal security, and exercise caution. Terrorist actions may include suicide operations, bombings, kidnappings, or targeting maritime vessels. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Increased security at official U.S. facilities has led terrorists to seek softer targets such as hotels, beach resorts, prominent public places, and landmarks. In particular, terrorists and likeminded extremists may target international aid workers, civil aviation, and

## Worldwide Caution (continued)

United States Department of State  
Bureau of Consular Affairs  
Washington, DC 20520

---

seaports in various locations throughout East Africa, including Somalia. Americans in remote areas or border regions where military or police authority is limited or non-existent could also become targets.

Americans considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there has been a notable increase in armed attacks, robberies, and kidnappings for ransom at sea by pirates in recent months. Merchant vessels continue to be hijacked in Somali territorial waters, while others have been hijacked as far as 300 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia, Yemen, and Kenya in international waters.

The U.S. Government maritime authorities advise mariners to avoid the port of Mogadishu, and to remain at least 200 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia. In addition, when transiting around the Horn of Africa or in the Red Sea, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys, and maintain good communications contact at all times. Americans traveling on commercial passenger vessels should consult with the shipping or cruise Ship Company regarding precautions that will be taken to avoid hijacking incidents. Commercial vessels should review the Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's suggested piracy countermeasures for vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden.

### South and Central Asia

The U.S. Government continues to receive information that terrorist groups in South and Central Asia may be planning attacks in the region, possibly against U.S. Government facilities, American citizens, or American interests. The presence of al-Qaida, Taliban elements, indigenous sectarian groups, and other terror organizations, many of which are on the U.S. Government's list of foreign terror organizations, poses a potential danger to American citizens in the region. Continuing tensions in the Middle East may also increase the threat of anti-Western or anti-American violence in the region.

Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and capability to attack targets where Americans or Westerners are known to congregate or visit. Their actions may include, but are not limited to, vehicle-borne explosives, improvised explosive devices, assassinations, carjacking, rocket attacks, assaults or kidnappings. In November 2008, coordinated terrorist attacks on luxury hotels, a Jewish community center, a restaurant, train station, hospital, and other facilities frequented by foreigners in Mumbai, India killed more than 170, including six Americans. On November 12, 2008, an American government contractor and his driver in Peshawar, Pakistan were shot and killed in their car. In September 2008, more than fifty people, including three Americans, were killed and hundreds were injured when a suicide bomber set off a truck filled with explosives outside a major international hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan. In August 2008, gunmen stopped and shot at the vehicle of an American diplomat in Peshawar. In August, three female western non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, along with their male Afghan driver, were gunned down as they traveled south of Kabul, Afghanistan. On June 2, 2008, a large bomb exploded in front of the Danish Embassy in Islamabad killing at least six people and wounding nearly 20. In May 2008, a series of coordinated bombings occurred in market and temple areas of the tourist city of Jaipur in Rajasthan, India. In Afghanistan, kidnappings and terrorist attacks on international organizations, international aid workers, and foreign interests continue. In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other groups have conducted suicide bombings at political rallies, government buildings, and major economic targets, and in recent months have increasingly targeted public transportation. Although there is no indication that American citizens were targeted in these attacks, and none were injured, there is a heightened risk of American citizens being victims of violence by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

# Worldwide Caution (continued)

United States Department of State  
Bureau of Consular Affairs  
Washington, DC 20520

---

Previous terrorist attacks conducted in Central Asia have involved improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers and have targeted public areas, such as markets, local government facilities, and, in 2004, the U.S. and Israeli Embassies in Uzbekistan. In addition, hostage-takings and skirmishes have occurred near the Uzbek-Tajik-Kyrgyz border areas.

## Before You Go

U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance, be aware of local events, and take the appropriate steps to bolster their personal security. For additional information, please refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" found at <http://travel.state.gov>.

U.S. Government facilities worldwide remain at a heightened state of alert. These facilities may temporarily close or periodically suspend public services to assess their security posture. In those instances, U.S. embassies and consulates will make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. Americans abroad are urged to monitor the local news and maintain contact with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

As the Department continues to develop information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its Consular Information Program documents, available on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. In addition to information on the Internet, travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, outside the United States and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday, Eastern Time (except U.S. federal holidays.)

## AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

**Consul General: Richard D Haynes**

**ACS Chief: Linda E. Daetwyler**

**Office: (63) (2) 301-2246 or 2567**

**Fax: (63) (2) 301-2017**

**Email: ACSInfoManila@state.gov**

### Passports

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 11:00am

By phone: M-F, 2-4pm x2555

For applications: FedEx - 02-879- 4747 or

### Citizenship and Birth Registration

By phone: M-F, 2-4pm x2532

By appointment only for forms/applications:

FedEx - 02-879-4747

### Notary Services

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

### Legal Capacity to Marry

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

### Emergencies

For emergencies after office hours please call (63) (2) 301-2000 and ask for the Duty Officer.

### **For further information, visit:**

<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, Cebu City

Mon through Fri, 9:00am - 11:00am

Tel: (63) (32) 231-1261

Fax: (63) (32) 231-0174

## 2009 HOLIDAY CALENDAR

HOLIDAY	LEGAL DATE	CLOSING DATE
Labor Day (PHIL)	Friday, May 1	Friday, May 1
Memorial Day (U.S.)	Monday, May 25	Monday, May 25
Independence Day (PHIL)	Friday, June 12	Friday, June 12
Independence Day (U.S.)	Friday, July 4	Friday, July 4
Ninoy Aquino Day (PHIL)	Friday, August 21	Friday, August 21
National Heroes Day (PHIL)	Monday, August 31	Monday, August 31
Labor Day (U.S.)	Monday, September 7	Monday, September 7
Eid-ul-Fitr (subject to proclamation-PHIL)	TBD	TBD
Columbus Day (U.S.)	Monday, October 12	Monday, October 12
Veterans Day (U.S.)	Wednesday, November 11	Wednesday, November 11
Thanksgiving Day (U.S.)	Thursday, November 26	Thursday, November 26
Bonifacio Day (PHIL)	Monday, November 30	Monday, November 30
Christmas Day (U.S./PHIL)	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25
Rizal Day (PHIL)	Wednesday, December 30	Wednesday, December 30
Last Day of the Year (PHIL)	Thursday, December 31	Thursday, December 31