

September 2009

ACS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 3

The warm friendship and mutual respect that Filipinos and Americans have for each other forms the cornerstone of consular work here at Embassy Manila.

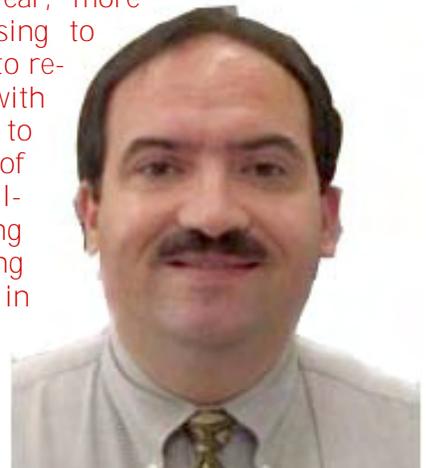
A little bit about me: I recently arrived in the Philippines to be the new American Citizens Services Chief. I have been in the Foreign Service since 1992 and have served in a variety of positions in Istanbul, Tokyo, Egypt, Washington, Rome and, most recently, once again in Tokyo.

HELPING AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES

At any given time, over 300,000 Americans live in and/or travel in the Philippines as tourists. I am proud to be part of a dedicated team providing a stellar level of service, which our American Citizens Services section is renowned for throughout the State Department.

We regularly assist American citizens with medical, financial and legal difficulties, as well as provide emergency services during crises or natural disasters. This issue of the quarterly newsletter **focuses on “Being Prepared!”** We are asking our residents and visitors to take some extra time to be prepared for the unexpected. This could be equipping yourselves for a natural disaster, keeping your Philippine visas or U.S. passports up-to-date, or staying heart healthy. Please take a few minutes to assess your disaster and first aid kits. Chat with your families about an emergency action plan. Get your passports out and make sure you have at least six months left before they expire. Together we can work to be prepared and stay safe!

assistance. Every year, more Americans are choosing to come to this country to retire, to be reunited with family, to invest, or to experience the world of wonder that is the Philippines. I am looking forward to meeting many of you while in this position. I am joined in Manila by my spouse and three children. They have acclimated to the city and are enjoying their schools and activities. We look forward to exploring the rest of the country and seeing the diverse and spectacular natural and cultural sites that abound.

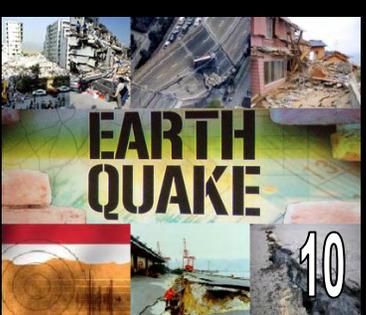


Michael E. Garrote
Chief
American Citizen Services

ACS Newsletter

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Be
Prepared

Don't Overstay Your Philippine Visa



Immigration violations are taken very seriously in the Philippines. Every year, dozens of foreigners pay fines and are put in Immigration detention for breaking the law. Visa regulations in the Philippines change often—be sure to check the Philippine Bureau of Immigration website at www.immigration.gov.ph frequently for updates.

Your visa is a very important document.

Make sure it is always current!

Visitors

U.S. citizens do not need a visa to enter the Philippines for stays of less than 21 days.

Foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, admitted under E.O. 408 (non-visa required nationals admitted for 21 days) may extend their stay in the Philippines beyond 21 days by applying for a *visa waiver* at the nearest Immigration Office **before** the expiration of the 21-day period. Visitors coming to the Philippines on the no-visa policy must enter for tourism purposes; have a passport valid for six-months beyond their estimated stay; and present proof of onward travel.

Temporary Residents

If the intended stay is over 21 days, a visa is required. Currently, 21-day visas can be extended to 59 days for approximately 5,000 Pesos. Visa extensions can be made at the Bureau of Immigration in Manila or at a regional office. Visitors who do not keep their Philippine visa status current may become subject to fines, detention, or deportation.

Foreign nationals holding a temporary visitors visa pursuant to

Philippine Immigration Act of 1940 and aliens admitted under E.O. 408 may extend their stay in the Philippines every 2 months for a total stay of 16 months. Extension of stay after 16 months, up to 24 months, needs the approval of the Chief of the Immigration Regulation Division. Extension of stay after 24 months needs the approval of the Commissioner. (MCL Memorandum dated 31 July 2007)

Effective September 17, 2007, applications for extension of tourist visas as well as payment thereof, shall be made **on or before the expiry dates** of the foreign national's lawful stay, otherwise, payments shall include penalties and motion for reconsideration.

Permanent Residents

There are many types of visas for permanent residents. The non-quota types are similar to U.S. family based categories. For example: spouses of Philippine citizens are eligible for a "13-a visa," which will give the holder a permanent resident status.

Under the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940, Section 13 (a), non-restricted nationals are eligible for permanent residency in the Philippines. This visa is issued to an alien on the basis of the valid marriage to a Philippine citizen.

To qualify for this visa, the applicant must prove that:

- He contracted a valid marriage with a Philippine citizen.
- The marriage is recognized as valid under existing Philippine laws.
- There is no record of any derogatory information against him in any local or foreign law enforcement agency.
- He is not afflicted with any dangerous, contagious, or loathsome disease.
- He has sufficient financial capacity to support a family and will not become a public burden.
- He was allowed entry into the Philippines and was authorized by Immigration authorities to stay.

NOTE: This visa is only available to citizens of a country that grants permanent residence and immigration privileges to Philippine citizens.

The Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV) is also available, but has age and financial requirements. The SRRV is advantageous because the holder receives a permanent non-immigrant status with multiple entry privileges.

For more information about SRRV, visit: <http://www.philippine-portal.com/visas/special-retiree-resident-visa-ssrv.html>.

Secure Flight Program



As of August 15, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) instituted the second phase of the Secure Flight program to streamline the watch list matching function while providing enhanced customer service to passengers and airlines. All passengers on flights over-flying the continental United States, flying to/from the United States, and all other flights operated by U.S. aircraft operations will be required to provide date of birth and gender when making reservations/arrangements. This new requirement, coupled with TSA's recommendation to use the name as shown on the passenger's passport or driver's license, will help prevent misidentification of passengers who have similar names to individuals on the No-Fly and Selectee list who may pose a known or suspected threat to transportation security.

Secure Flight is a uniform passenger pre-screening program developed in response to a key 9/11 Commission recommendation. Until now, aircraft operators have had the responsibility for properly matching their passengers' names to the watch lists pro-

What is Secure Flight and what does it do?

Secure Flight is a behind the scenes program that streamlines the watch list matching process. It will improve the travel experience for all passengers, including those who have been misidentified in the past.

vided to them by the Terrorist Screening Center, which is a component of the FBI responsible for maintaining the consolidated database of terrorist watch lists. Because each aircraft operator has conducted its own matching process, the system has shown inconsistencies. This explains why the same passenger will often have trouble obtaining a boarding pass, or be told they are on a watch list, by one airline and not another.



By assuming watch list matching responsibilities from the airlines, TSA:

- Decreases the chance for compromised watch list data by limiting its distribution
- Provides earlier identification of potential matches, allowing for expedited notification of law enforcement and threat management
- Provides a fair, equitable, and consistent matching process across all airlines
- Reduces instances of misidentified individuals
- Offers consistent application of an expedited and integrated redress process for misidentified individuals via the Department of Homeland Security's Travel Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) at http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1169676919316.shtm

Secure Flight will be phased-in and each airline will be incorporating the necessary changes into their systems over the coming months. Secure Flight's advanced technology will be fully implemented in early 2010.

For more information on Secure Flight please visit TSA's Secure Flight homepage at http://www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/layers/secureflight/index.shtm.

HEALTHbytes



LOVE YOUR HEART

A newer risk factor is the metabolic syndrome, a cluster of factors that includes abdominal obesity, low HDL and elevated triglycerides, blood pressure and blood sugar. This syndrome is associated with a much higher incidence of heart disease than usual. Recent studies have shown that inflammation of blood vessels in people with a high level of C-reactive protein in their blood is a powerful risk factor for coronary disease and stroke, even in the presence of normal cholesterol. Another study showed that the incidence of these conditions, as well as mortality from heart disease, can be reduced nearly 50 percent by treatment with cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins in persons over the age of 50. Other emerging risk factors for coronary artery disease include depression and low levels of Vitamin D.

In addition to risk factors, it is important to know the symptoms of a heart attack. Generally, the main symptom is mid-chest pain, which may be severe, but is occasionally experienced as tightness or heavy pressure that lasts more than a minute or two. The pain may radiate to the neck, jaws, shoulder, back or arms, usually the left arm. Accompanying symptoms may include shortness of breath, weakness, fatigue, sweating or nausea. While women having a heart attack often have similar chest pain, they experience a high incidence of atypical symptoms without chest pain, such as sudden shortness of breath, weakness and extreme fatigue or severe nausea. Sudden, severe indigestion in someone with risk factors and without a history of upper gastrointestinal disease is a common symptom of a heart attack.

Modern medicine has tools such as clot-busting drugs and emergency angioplasty,

Heart disease, the leading killer of Americans, is responsible for one of three deaths—nearly 900,000 yearly—in the United States. Most significant is coronary artery disease, in which plaque obstructs the pencil-sized blood vessels that supply the heart muscle, leading to angina, heart attack and sudden death. Cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes and high levels of LDL (“bad” cholesterol) are major risk factors. Other important risk factors include low HDL (“good cholesterol”), obesity and sedentary lifestyle. Age and family history of heart attacks, especially premature ones, are two risk factors that cannot be controlled, but all others are modifiable.

a procedure that opens a coronary with a balloon-like device and usually uses a metal tube called a stent to keep it open. These can save lives and minimize the amount of heart muscle damage, but they must be administered in the first few hours after onset of symptoms.

You should not drive yourself to the emergency room. If you are in an area where emergency medical transportation is inadequate or nonexistent, then having a spouse or neighbor drive you may be the only choice. You should chew an adult aspirin (not enteric-coated) or for 81-mg “baby” aspirin at once if you are not allergic to them. If you are discharged from the hospital without a clear diagnosis, notify your primary care doctor of medical provider and arrange for follow-up and possible further testing.

Preventive measures are important, especially for people with one or more risk factors. Exercise is very important. Moderate activities are recommended, such as brisk walking, biking or swimming 30 minutes a day, five times a week. Even walking up one or two flights of stairs instead of taking the elevator, walking to work or parking farther from the entrance have been shown to be beneficial.

Maintaining ideal weight and eating a heart-healthy diet are essential. A low-fat diet is important if you have elevated cholesterol. Recent studies suggest that the Mediterranean diet, consisting of fish, olive or canola oil, vegetables, fruits and grains and very little red meat may be best for preventing heart disease and losing weight. Fish-oil supplements or eating cold-water fish twice a week may be helpful, especially for people who have high levels of triglycerides. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recently recommended that all men ages 45 to 79 and women 55 to 79 take a low-dose 81-mg aspirin daily if they are not at high risk of gastrointestinal bleeding. Always check with your primary care provider before taking any supplement.

Mortality from cardiovascular disease in the United States has fallen in the past few years after a steady rise in previous decades. Better drugs, angioplasty and bypass surgery play some role, but preventive measures account for at least half of the improvement.

Contact your primary care physician for more information or assistance in reducing your risk for heart disease. To calculate your risk for a heart attack using information easily available from your personal physician go to www.framinghamheartstudy.org/risk.



Heart disease, the leading killer of Americans, is responsible for one of three deaths—nearly 900,000 yearly—in the United States.



The Post - 9/11 GI Bill

The Post - 9/11 GI Bill is a new VA education benefit program for individuals who served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001.

When can I receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. No payments can be made under this program for training pursued before that date.

Am I eligible?

You may be eligible if you served at least 90 aggregate days on active duty after September 10, 2001, and:

- you are still on active duty or were honorably-discharged from the active duty; or
- released from active duty and placed on the retired list or temporary disability retired list; or
- released from active duty and transferred to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve; or
- released from the active duty for further service in a reserve component of the Armed Forces.

You may also be eligible if you were honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability and you served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001.

If I am eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve, or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program, am I eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill?

If, on August 1, 2009, you are eligible for one of these programs **and** you qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, you may make an irrevocable election to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Note: Once you elect to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, you will no longer be eligible to receive benefits under the program from which you elected the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

How much will I receive?

Based on your length of active duty service, you are entitled to a percentage of the following:

- Cost of tuition and fees, not to exceed the most expensive in-state undergraduate tuition at a public institution of higher education (paid to

school); In the Philippines the maximum is \$6,803.25 per semester (paid directly to the school).

- Monthly housing allowance equal to the basic allowance for housing payable to a military E-5 with dependents, in the same zip code as your school (paid to you); In the Philippines this is \$1,207.02 a month (paid to you).
- Yearly books and supplies stipend of up to \$1000 per year (paid to you).

How Do I Apply?

Additional information and application is available online at <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

View the nine-minute video that provides basic information that every veteran should know before deciding to use this program at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/VeteransHealthAdmin>.



Weather Concern: **TYPHOONS**



A typhoon, or tropical cyclone, is a weather system, characterized by a large low-pressure center and many thunderstorms, capable of producing strong winds and heavy rains. "Tropical" refers to the geographic origin of these storms, and their formation in maritime tropical air masses.

"Cyclone" refers to the storms' cyclonic nature with counterclockwise rotation in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise rotation in the Southern Hemisphere. Depending on its location and strength, a tropical cyclone is referred to by different names, such as hurricane, typhoon, tropical storm, cyclonic storm, tropical depression, and simply cyclone. In the Philippines, the name of any tropical cyclone is *bagyo*.

PAGASA, or Philippine Atmospheric Geo-physical & Astronomical Services Administration, is responsible for monitoring weather and providing flood and typhoon warnings. PAGASA is also responsible for naming all the tropical cyclones in the Philippines.

Tropical depressions and typhoons are common this time of year for the Philippines. Reports on developing storm activity are available on

<http://metocph.nmci.navy.mil> and www.typhoon2000.ph.

In the event of severe tropical depressions, please note the following recommendations to ensure minimal disruption or damage to yourself and your property:

- secure loose outdoor items around the home;
- fill vehicles and generator fuel tanks;
- check and charge all cell phones and emergency radios;
- make ice blocks;
- check and assemble flashlights, tools, and first aid kits;
- procure batteries, candles, matches, potable water, canned or dry food, pet foods, medications, etc.

Two Web sites: www.ready.gov and www.americanredcross.org offer additional emergency preparedness plans for your immediate review.

Information about approaching weather patterns can be found at <http://www.typhoon2000.ph/> and <http://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/wb/wxfcst.html>.



To prepare for a flood:

- Avoid building or buying a home in a floodplain (unless you elevate and reinforce the building).
- Elevate the furnace, water heater, and electric panel if home has been damaged by flood waters in the past.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up through the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, or floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering your home. Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid leaks from outside.

During a Flood:

If a flood is likely in your area:

Listen to local radio stations, commercial radio, or television for information. Check the latest weather update at <http://www.typhoon2000.ph/> or <http://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/> or call their 24-hour hotline at 433-ULAN (433-8526).

- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without warning when there are sudden, heavy down pours.

If you must prepare to evacuate:

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture and move essential items (don't forget keepsakes) to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. But remember, do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

Evacuation Tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, you and your vehicle can be quickly swept away. If you can do so safely, abandon the vehicle and move to higher ground.

Driving in Flood Conditions:

The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions:

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUV's) and pick-up trucks.

After a Flood:

- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of your vehicle.
- Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to the power company.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Stay out of any building, if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards. Clean and disinfect everything that got wet during the flood. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.



A volcano is a mountain that opens downward to a reservoir of molten rock below the surface of the earth. Unlike most mountains, which are pushed up from below, volcanoes are built up by an accumulation of their own eruptive products. When pressure from gases within the molten rock becomes too great, an eruption occurs. Eruptions can be quiet or explosive. There may be lava flows, flattened landscapes, poisonous gases, and flying rock and ash.

Because of their intense heat, lava flows are great fire hazards. Lava flows destroy everything in their path, but most move slowly enough that people can move out of the way.

Fresh volcanic ash, made of pulverized rock, can be abrasive, acidic, gritty, gassy, and odorous. While not immediately dangerous to most adults, the acidic gas and ash can cause lung damage to small infants, to older adults, and to those suffering from severe respiratory illnesses. Volcanic ash also can damage machinery, including engines and electrical equipment. Ash accumulations mixed with water become heavy and can collapse roofs. Volcanic ash can affect people hundreds of miles away from the cone of a volcano.

Sideways directed volcanic explosions, known as "lateral blasts," can shoot large pieces of rock at very high speeds for several miles. These explosions can kill by impact, burial, or heat. They have been known to knock down entire forests.

Volcanic eruptions can be accompanied by other natural hazards, including earthquakes, mudflows and flash floods, rock falls and landslides, acid rain, fire, and (under special conditions) tsunamis.

What to do Before a Volcanic Eruption

- Add a pair of goggles and a disposable breathing mask for each member of the family to your disaster supply kit.
- Stay away from active volcano sites.
- If you live near a known volcano, active or dormant, be ready to evacuate at a moment's notice.

What to Do During a Volcanic Eruption

If a Volcano Erupts Where You Live:

- Follow the evacuation order issued by authorities and evacuate immediately from the volcano area to avoid flying debris, hot gases, lateral blast, and lava flow.



VOLCANOES

Be Prepared!

- Be aware of mudflows. The danger from a mudflow increases near stream channels and with prolonged heavy rains. Mudflows can move faster than you can walk or run. Look upstream before crossing a bridge, and do not cross the bridge if a mudflow is approaching.
- Avoid river valleys and low-lying areas. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance - infants, elderly people, and people with disabilities.

Protection from Falling Ash

- Listen to a battery-powered radio or television for the latest emergency information.
- If you have a respiratory ailment, avoid contact with any amount of ash.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use goggles and wear eyeglasses instead of contact lenses.
- Use a dust mask or hold a damp cloth over your face to help with breathing.
- Stay away from areas downwind from the volcano to avoid volcanic ash.
- Stay indoors until the ash has settled unless there is a danger of the roof collapsing.
- Close doors, windows, and all ventilation in the house (chimney vents, furnaces, air conditioners, fans, and other vents.)
- Clear heavy ash from flat or low-pitched roofs and rain gutters.
- Avoid running car or truck engines. Driving can stir up volcanic ash that can clog engines, damage moving parts, and stall vehicles.
- Avoid driving in heavy ash fall unless absolutely required. If you have to drive, keep speed down to 35 MPH or slower.

EARTHQUAKES

Be Prepared!

One of the most frightening and destructive phenomena of nature is a severe earthquake and its terrible aftereffects. Earthquakes strike suddenly, violently, and without warning at any time of the day or night. If an earthquake occurs in a populated area, it may cause many deaths and injuries and extensive property damage.

Six Ways to Plan Ahead

1. Check for Hazards in the Home

- Fasten shelves securely to walls.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Store breakable items such as bottled foods, glass, and china in low, closed cabinets with latches.
- Hang heavy items such as pictures and mirrors away from beds, couches, and anywhere people sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections. These are potential fire risks.
- Secure a water heater by strapping it to the wall studs and bolting it to the floor.



- Repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations. Get expert advice if there are signs of structural defects.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products securely in closed cabinets with latches and on bottom shelves.

2. Identify Safe Places Indoors and Outdoors

- Under sturdy furniture such as a heavy desk or table.
- Against an inside wall.
- Away from where glass could shatter around

windows, mirrors, pictures, or where heavy bookcases or other heavy furniture could fall over.

- In the open, away from buildings, trees, telephone and electrical lines, overpasses, or elevated expressways.

3. Educate Yourself and Family Members

- Contact your local emergency management office or Red Cross chapter for more information on earthquakes. Also read the "How-To Series" for information on how to protect your property from earthquakes.
- Teach children how and when to call the police or fire department and which radio station to tune to for emergency information.
- Teach all family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water.

4. Have Disaster Supplies on Hand

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Emergency food and water
- Nonelectric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes



5. Develop an Emergency Communication Plan

- In case family members are separated from one another during an earthquake (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), develop a plan for reuniting after the disaster.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

6. Help Your Community Get Ready

- Publish a special section in your local newspaper with emergency information on earthquakes. Localize the information by printing the phone numbers of local emergency services offices, the Red Cross, and hospitals.
- Conduct a week-long series on locating hazards in the home.
- Work with local emergency services and Red Cross officials to prepare special reports for people with mobility impairments on what to do during an earthquake.
- Provide tips on conducting earthquake drills in the home.
- Interview representatives of the gas, electric, and water companies about shutting off utilities.
- Work together in your community to apply your knowledge to building codes, retrofitting programs, hazard hunts, and neighborhood and family emergency plans.



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What to Do During an Earthquake

Stay as safe as possible during an earthquake. Be aware that some earthquakes are actually foreshocks and a larger earthquake might occur. Minimize your movements to a few steps to a nearby safe place and stay indoors until the shaking has stopped and you are sure exiting is safe.

If indoors -

- **DROP** to the ground; take **COVER** by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and **HOLD ON** until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.
- Stay in bed if you are there when the earthquake strikes. Hold on and protect your head with a pillow, unless you are under a heavy light fixture that could fall. In that case, move to the nearest safe place.
- Use a doorway for shelter only if it is in close proximity to you and if you know it is a strongly supported, loadbearing doorway.
- Stay inside until shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Research has shown that most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location inside the building or try to leave.
- Be aware that the electricity may go out or the sprinkler systems or fire alarms may turn on.
- DO NOT use the elevators.

If outdoors -

- Stay there.
- Move away from buildings,

streetlights, and utility wires.

- Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops. The greatest danger exists directly outside buildings, at exits, and alongside exterior walls. Many of the 120 fatalities from the 1933 Long Beach earthquake occurred when people ran outside of buildings only to be killed by falling debris from collapsing walls. Ground movement during an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most earthquake-related casualties result from collapsing walls, flying glass, and falling objects.

If in a moving vehicle

- Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires.
- Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that might have been damaged by the earthquake.

If trapped under debris

- Do not light a match.
- Do not move about or kick up dust.
- Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

What to Do After an Earthquake

- **Expect aftershocks.** These secondary shockwaves are usually less violent than the main quake but can be strong enough to do additional damage to weakened structures and can occur in the first hours, days, weeks, or even months after the quake.
- **Listen to a battery-operated radio or television.** Listen for the latest emergency information.
- **Use the telephone only for emergency calls.**
- **Open cabinets cautiously.** Beware of objects that can fall off shelves.

- **Stay away from damaged areas.** Stay away unless your assistance has been specifically requested by police, fire, or relief organizations. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- **Be aware of possible tsunamis if you live in coastal areas.** These are also known as seismic sea waves (mistakenly called "tidal waves"). When local authorities issue a tsunami warning, assume that a series of dangerous waves is on the way. Stay away from the beach.
- **Help injured or trapped persons.** Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance such as infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Give first aid where appropriate. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.
- **Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately.** Leave the area if you smell gas or fumes from other chemicals.
- **Inspect the entire length of chimneys for damage.** Unnoticed damage could lead to a fire.
- **Inspect utilities.**
 - ⇒ **Check for gas leaks.** If you smell gas or hear blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
 - ⇒ **Look for electrical system damage.** If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician first for advice.
 - ⇒ **Check for sewage and water lines damage.** If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

Travel Warning

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

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, 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.



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.

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.

Worldwide Caution

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

July 29, 2009

The Department of State has issued this Worldwide Caution to update information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against American citizens and interests throughout the world. In some countries, the worldwide recession has contributed to political and economic instability and social unrest. 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 February 2, 2009 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 July 17 bombing of the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia, where at least nine people were killed and six Americans were among the 50 or more injured; the February 2009 kidnapping of an American UNHCR official in Pakistan; the kidnapping of four European tourists in January on the Mali-Niger border; the kidnapping of two Canadian diplomats in Niger in December 2008; and the kidnapping of NGO workers along the Kenya-Somali border in July 2009 all illustrate the continuing desire of extremists to strike Western targets and perceived interests.

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 frequented by Westerners in Mumbai, India, on November 26, 2008. Over 170 persons are believed to have been killed, including six Americans, and hundreds were injured. On September 20, 2008, terrorists bombed the Islamabad Marriott Hotel killing two U.S. Department of Defense employees and one Department of State contractor. 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. The March 15, 2008, bombing of an Italian restaurant in Islamabad, Pakistan, injured several Americans.

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 incidents 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.

Worldwide Caution (continued)

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
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Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Increased security at official U.S. facilities has led terrorists and their sympathizers to seek softer targets such as public transportation, residential areas, and public areas where people congregate, including restaurants, hotels, clubs, and shopping areas.

In January 2009, unidentified gunmen opened fire outside the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen. No injuries were reported. 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 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. 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 in December 2008 and January 2009 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. On February 22, 2009, there was a bomb attack targeting a popular tourist destination in Cairo, Egypt's Old City. Tourist destinations in Egypt frequented by Westerners were also 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 like-minded extremists may target international aid workers, civil aviation, and seaports in various locations throughout East Africa, including Somalia. On July 17, three NGO workers were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen from their base in Mandera, Kenya, located on the border with Somalia. Americans in remote areas or border regions where military or police authority is limited or non-existent could also become targets.

Worldwide Caution (continued)

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

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.

West Africa

The terrorist group, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), has become increasingly active in the West African countries of Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, as well as in parts of North Africa. AQIM uses regions of these countries as safe havens and platforms from which to conduct operations. Formerly known as GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), AQIM has been designated a terrorist organization by both the United States and the European Union.

AQIM has declared its intention to attack Western interests and targets. AQIM is known to operate in the northern region of Mali, the southeastern region of Mauritania, and along the border between Niger and Mali. In addition to being a threat to Westerners, AQIM contributes to civil unrest and banditry, which reinforce longstanding security concerns in West Africa. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid travel to these areas. U.S. government personnel are required to obtain advance written approval to travel to these areas. For additional information about travel in this region, please consult the Country Specific Information (CSI) for Mauritania, Mali, and Niger.

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. 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 June 2009, gunmen stormed the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar, Pakistan, and detonated a bomb that resulted in several deaths and scores of injuries. In February 2009, Taliban insurgents conducted a coordinated terrorist attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, which resulted in the death of at least 26 and the wounding of 50 individuals. Between October 2008 and June 2009, several American citizens were kidnapped in Afghanistan and Pakistan. 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. Also in August, three western non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, along with their Afghan driver, were gunned down as they traveled south

Worldwide Caution (continued)

United States Department of State
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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.

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](#) to 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](#)".

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](#). 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: Karen L. Christensen
ACS Chief: Michael E. Garrote
Office: (63) (2) 301-2246 or 2567
Fax: (63) (2) 301-2017
Email: ACSInfoManila@state.gov

Passports

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 11:00am
 Information by phone: M-F, 2-4pm x2555
 For applications: FedEx - 02-879- 4747

Citizenship and Birth Registration

By appointment only
 Information by phone: M-F, 2-4pm x2532
 For 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

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

2009/2010 HOLIDAY CALENDAR

HOLIDAY	LEGAL DATE	CLOSING DATE
Eid-ul-Fitr (subject to proclamation-PHIL)	Monday, September 21	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
New Year's Day (U.S./PHIL)	Friday, January 1	Friday, January 1
M.L. King, Jr. Day (U.S.)	Monday, January 18	Monday, January 18