

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What can the U.S. Government do to help citizens in countries facing civil strife or natural disaster?

The U.S. Department of State issues Travel Alerts or Travel Warnings alerting Americans to credible, specific potential threats and providing relevant information. As a crisis develops, the U.S. embassy in the country concerned will contact local wardens, who are volunteers that have been organized to pass information from the Embassy to Americans working with or living near them. As a situation becomes more serious, the Embassy may recommend Americans to leave, and may assist Americans to arrange commercial transportation out of the country. If commercial transportation is unavailable, the Embassy may organize charter flights to transport Americans out of country, or request aircraft and other assistance from the U.S. military to evacuate Americans.

How can I ensure that I receive information from the Embassy?

The most important thing you can do is register with the Embassy, if you have not already done so. You can register by creating a secure account on the State Department website that will allow you to inform the State Department about all of your travel. To register, citizens should visit the registration page of our travel information website at <http://travel.state.gov/step>. Citizens are also welcome to provide additional details or make inquiries with the Embassy's Consular Section at (232)76-515-000, or by e-mail at: consularfreetown@state.gov. Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts are also posted on the State Department website, at: http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html.

Who will pay to evacuate me and my family?

If commercial carriers are operating, the Embassy will recommend that you depart on your own and at your own expense. If you do not have money to pay the fare, the Embassy can help you contact family and friends and assist in transferring money from them. In extreme circumstances, a destitute American wishing to return to the U.S. may qualify for a repatriation loan. The conditions for making such loans are stringent, and your passport will be limited until you repay the loan. If commercial carriers are not operating, and the U.S. government charters aircraft or requests military assistance, you will be required to sign a promissory note guaranteeing repayment. The government is required by law to seek repayment of expenses for the evacuation of Americans from overseas locations. The amount charged is generally the cost of a full fare economy ticket. If the actual cost per evacuee is less, you will be charged this lesser amount. The Embassy will not require, and will not be able to take, cash or credit at the time of evacuation. You will be billed later and your passport will not be limited.

Where will I be evacuated to?

In most cases, the U.S. government will bring Americans to the nearest safe location, which is generally not the United States. Evacuees will be helped by Embassy staff at that location in making arrangements for onward transportation, if that is desired.

My child is an American citizen but I am not. Can you evacuate me and the rest of my family?

If a child does not have an American parent or guardian in-country, the U.S. government will allow one adult to travel with the child on an evacuation flight. If there is more than one American child in the same family, only one adult escort will be permitted. Non-American siblings will not be provided evacuation assistance. Non-American escorts are not guaranteed entry into the United States. They will need to apply for and qualify for an appropriate visa. The non-American escort must also be documentarily qualified to enter the country designated as the safe location.

I am an American but my spouse and children are not. Can you evacuate all of us?

If a head of household is an American citizen, we will generally be able to provide evacuation assistance to the American's dependents. This will generally include a non-American spouse and minor children. All dependents must be documentarily qualified to enter the country designated as the safe location. Non-American family members are not guaranteed entry into the United States. They will need to apply for and qualify for an appropriate visa.

Besides transportation, what other assistance is available from the U.S. government for evacuees?

The U.S. government is not able to provide money for food, lodging or other purposes to evacuees. Once evacuees have arrived in a safe location, they are expected to provide for themselves. U.S. Embassy employees will be available to assist in finding hotels and onward transportation. They may also be able to assist in contacting family and friends and in transferring funds.

What will I be allowed to bring on the evacuation flight?

Each evacuee will be allowed to bring one suitcase, weighing less than 10 kilos (22 pounds), and one carry on item. Pets will not be allowed on evacuation flights.

How can I prepare for the possibility of evacuation?

There are a number of on-line resources available to advise Americans on preparing for the possibility of evacuation. These include the following:

“Prepare Your Home and Family” (American Red Cross)

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family>

“Preparing an Evacuation Plan” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

<http://www.nationalterroralert.com/readyguide/evacuationplan.htm>