



Consular Section

Consular operations represent a major share of Mission resources and have a high impact on public perceptions of the United States. The more than 250,000 American citizens residing in the Philippines create a substantial demand for consular services ranging from passport issuance to assistance with parental child custody disputes. Manila historically has the second highest volume of immigrant visa applicants in the world and is among the top twenty non-immigrant visa issuing posts. The Consular Section maintains a close working relationship with its Department of Homeland Security(DHS) colleagues by meeting weekly with United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and Visa Security Investigations (VSU) representatives. We share common values and extensive historical ties with the Philippines. These ties are reflected in the strong working relationship consular affairs has with the government.

American Citizens Services (ACS)

ACS provides services, protection, and advice and assistance to the estimated 250,000 US citizens who are residing in the Philippines at any given time. Last year, the unit processed over 12,000 passport and 2,300 Consular Report of Birth Abroad applications, provided approximately 10,000 notarial services, assisted in more than 1,000 death cases and 300 welfare and whereabouts cases, and helped nearly 140 U.S. citizens needing repatriation assistance. Our Consular Agency in Cebu provides support and assistance to U.S. citizens in the central and southern Philippines. The most demanding Special Consular Services cases involve complicated medical cases, including medical repatriations; death cases where the U.S. citizen died of other than natural causes; and child custody cases.



ACS local staff talking to an American citizen in Tacloban City after the typhoon Yolanda.

Immigrant Visa (IV) Unit

Manila's Immigrant Visa (IV) unit is the second busiest in the world, processing an average of 65,000 cases per year. In accordance with U.S. immigration law, most petitions are based on family connections, but we also see a large number of employment-based petitions, primarily in the healthcare field. In fact, Manila's IV unit issues about one out of every four employment-based visas in the world. Unfortunately, high visa demand means that some Filipinos wait longer than anyone else—over two decades at times. Speaking of high visa demand, nearly one out every five fiancés petitioned around the world are Filipino—we processed almost 8,000 in Manila alone last year! With the U.S. Supreme Court striking down key aspects of the Defense of Marriage Act in June 2013, the IV unit has received hundreds of same-sex fiancé petitions over the last year.

Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV) Unit

Manila is one of the world's largest NIV sections, processing over 180,000 NIVs in 2014. The NIV unit is also the world's largest processor of C1/D crew visas with nearly one-third of applicants being seafarers. NIV routinely conducts outreach with the public on visa procedures via our ViSatisfied Voyager public blog, website, and Facebook. Furthermore, NIV works closely with the Philippine American Education Foundation (PAEF) to promote study in the U.S. and understanding about the student visa process.



Nonimmigrant visa officers and LES interviewing applicants at the window.



SSA/FBU Outreach conducted at the Consular Agency, Cebu

Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU)

While fraudulent documents and genuine documents based on fraudulent information are commonly available throughout the Philippines, most consular applicants in Manila qualify for the benefits for which they are applying. However, Post does see specific, fraud trends. FPU helps the other consular units to understand trends, and provides resources and support to combat fraud. In the spirit of collaboration, FPU works closely with the fraud prevention efforts of other Embassies. The Ambassador has made combating TIP a Mission priority. FPU integrates with other elements of the Mission in an effort to prevent trafficking in persons and labor-related abuses of applicants that can include payment of illegal fees, promises of non-existent jobs, and other labor and wage violations.



FPU hosted a fraud workshop at the Hyatt Hotel & Casino with Philippine recruitment agencies.