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### **WARDEN MESSAGE – PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Safety is a matter of personal responsibility. The American Citizen Services unit is providing the following warden message to help all resident and visiting American citizens evaluate their security environment and level of security awareness. This is particularly important as we move through the summer and more people are spending time outdoors, where they can become targets of opportunities for criminals, especially pickpockets.

#### **PICKPOCKETS**

Pickpockets remain a problem in the city center, including the Ploshtad, Trgovski Center, and Old Town. Pedestrians should remain cognizant of their belongings and their surroundings at all times. Pickpockets use various diversionary tactics to distract victims. While swarming remains a standard technique, in which a group of children surround the target with the intention of causing sufficient confusion and discomfort so that the victim does not think to protect his belongings, other methods also are commonly used. One tactic is to ask or beg for money. The purpose of asking is not to obtain money, but to identify the location of the wallet, whether on the potential target or in a purse or bag, and the amount of money inside. Not only does the pickpocket know exactly where to go for the wallet later, he/she can determine in advance if the target is worth the effort.

Another, less used, diversion is for a parent to ask for help with a child or to hand a child to the target. The target automatically extends his arms to catch the baby, exposing pockets and purses to the pickpocket's co-conspirators, who quickly relieve the target of his possessions. In all these situations, the best course of action is to secure all belongings while moving away from the aggressors. Do not strike out at or assault the pickpockets unless you are in fear of physical injury to yourself or others.

If you do become the victim of pickpockets, immediately seek help, since timely notification is essential to recovering stolen goods. If you can, alert the police and ask them to initiate a search for the pickpockets.

## VEHICLE SAFETY

When driving, keep your doors locked and windows rolled up, especially when entering congested intersections with beggars and hawkers present. Keep valuable items on the floor of your vehicle or in the trunk, where they cannot be easily removed. When parking your vehicle, lock all doors and close windows. Place all valuables out of sight.

## RESIDENTIAL SECURITY

Lock your doors, even when family members are at home. Windows accessible from ground level or easily accessible balconies should be secured at night to prevent entry. Most home burglaries are crimes of opportunity. Make sure your residence is not worth the burglar's effort.

Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the U.S. Embassy's website, and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov), where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information can be found. The U.S. Embassy also encourages U.S. citizens to review to "A Safe Trip Abroad," found at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_1747.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html), which includes valuable security information for those both living and traveling abroad. 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 U.S. and Canada, or outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Citizens living and residing in Macedonia are advised to register their presence in the country through the U.S. Department of State's automated online registration system, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. U.S. citizens may also contact the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy via e-mail or by calling **+389 (02) 310-2000**. This complete message is available on the Embassy's website at <http://macedonia.usembassy.gov>. In case of an emergency outside normal business hours, American citizens may reach the Embassy duty officer by calling **(02) 310-2000**.