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### SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION

While the security situation in Macedonia is currently stable, travelers always should be alert for unusual behavior and other possible indicators that something out of the ordinary might be happening. Americans should avoid demonstrations and other sites, such as roadblocks, where large crowds are gathered, particularly those involving political causes or striking workers. Acts of intimidation and violence against American citizens have not occurred recently but remain possible. While overall levels of crime throughout Macedonia remain low, there have been occasional incidents of home and vehicle break-ins. We remind all American citizens to lock their windows and doors at all times and not to leave any valuables in plain sight in their vehicle.

Acts of violence in recent months in public venues, such as cafes and nightclubs, appear to be isolated incidents; however, all Americans are urged to remain alert and observant when in public. If you are inadvertently caught in this situation, take the following actions: remain calm, seek position of cover (under a table, etc.), avoid confrontation, leave if you can safely do so, try to stay with your group, and call the police.

The Worldwide Caution issued for American citizens abroad by the U.S. Department of State regarding the threat of terrorist acts remains in effect. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's

website at <http://travel.state.gov>, where up-to-date [Worldwide Caution Public Announcements](#), [Travel Warnings and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

## UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

The Embassy will be closed for the following holidays:

- Christmas Eve – Monday, December 24
- Christmas Day – Tuesday, December 25
- New Year’s Day – Tuesday, January 1
- Orthodox Christmas – Monday, January 7
- Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday – Monday, January 21
- Presidents’ Day – Monday, February 18

## HOLIDAY SECURITY AWARENESS

We take this opportunity to remind American citizens and their family members to increase their general level of security awareness and take appropriate precautions during the upcoming holiday season. Typically, the holiday season brings a general increase in criminal activity. Below is specific information and guidance on how to keep you and your family safe throughout the holidays.

- Think about what’s in your handbag before leaving home. You should only take what you really need when shopping.
- Keep purses, wallets, and cash secure at the bottom of bags or deep in pockets.
- Do not put valuables in back packs.
- Do not let handbags out of your sight in shops or cafes.
- Do not leave handbags on the backs of chairs or unattended on the floor of restaurants, cafes, bars, or hotels.
- Do not carry your bag over one shoulder where someone can grab it. Wear it around your body so the strap crosses from shoulder to hip.
- Be aware of others when using an ATM/cash point.
- Do not leave valuables on display in cars and make sure your car is locked.

Drinking and driving is illegal, both under Macedonian and U.S. law. If in doubt, take a taxi or call a friend for a ride. Even if you do not drink and drive, keep in mind that other drivers on the road may be intoxicated. In conjunction with dim street lighting, poor road conditions, general careless driving, and pedestrians wearing dark clothes, the roadways can be a hazardous place for both drivers and pedestrians. Please drive and walk responsibly and carefully.

Over the next few weeks, there will be a number of large public events and celebrations in Skopje and throughout Macedonia, including traditional and Orthodox New Year’s celebrations in the city center. These events attract crowds in the thousands, including criminals looking for vulnerable targets. Many individuals participating in New Years celebrations will be using alcohol and may display or

discharge firearms. Your personal security awareness should address these important issues as well.

### **TEN WAYS TO HELP ENSURE THAT YOUR ABSENTEE VOTE IS COUNTED**

- (1) Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program's website at <http://www.fvap.gov> for information on the absentee registration and voting process.
- (2) Ensure that you have applied for your absentee ballot using the hard copy or on-line versions of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) form.
- (3) Make sure your local election official has your current mailing address.
- (4) Sign and date all election materials.
- (5) Fulfill your state's witness/notary requirements (if required).
- (6) Ensure that your ballot or FPCA is postmarked.
- (7) Register to vote and request your ballot in a timely manner - not later than September 2008.
- (8) VOTE - mail your ballot not later than October 15th of the election year.
- (9) Use the Federal Write In Absentee Ballot if you are overseas and your State absentee ballot does not arrive in time to be mailed back by your state's deadline.
- (10) Contact the U.S. Embassy's Voting Assistance Officer for help in absentee registration and voting. The Embassy's Voting Assistance officer is available at [VoteSkopje@state.gov](mailto:VoteSkopje@state.gov).

### **STATE VOTING DATES FOR THE 2008 PRIMARY ELECTIONS**

#### **NEW HAMPSHIRE AND MICHIGAN PRIMARY ELECTION DATES**

New Hampshire and Michigan have scheduled their Presidential Primary elections. New Hampshire will conduct their Presidential Primary election on January 8, 2008 and Michigan will conduct their Presidential Primary election for January 15, 2008.

#### **REGISTERING TO VOTE AND REQUESTING A BALLOT:**

If you have not done so already in calendar year 2007, all members of the U.S. Uniformed Services and their family members and citizens residing outside the U.S. who are either New Hampshire or Michigan residents should request a ballot by completing and submitting a registration and ballot request Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), SF-76, as soon as possible. The online version of the FPCA is available from the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefpc.html>

## OTHER EARLY PRIMARY ELECTIONS

The following states will hold Primary elections early in 2008. An asterisk indicates a change from the date printed in the Voting Assistance Guide:

New Hampshire	January 8, 2008
Michigan	January 15, 2008
South Carolina	January 19, 2008
Florida	January 29, 2008
South Carolina	January 29, 2008
Alabama	February 5, 2008
Arizona	February 5, 2008
Arkansas	February 5, 2008
California	February 5, 2008
Connecticut	February 5, 2008
Delaware	February 5, 2008
Georgia	February 5, 2008
Illinois	February 5, 2008
Missouri	February 5, 2008
New Jersey	February 5, 2008
New Mexico (D)	February 5, 2008
New York	February 5, 2008
Oklahoma	February 5, 2008
Tennessee	February 5, 2008
Utah	February 5, 2008
Louisiana	February 9, 2008
District of Columbia	February 12, 2008
Maryland	February 12, 2008
Virginia	February 12, 2008
Washington	February 19, 2008
Wisconsin	February 19, 2008
Massachusetts	March 4, 2008
Ohio	March 4, 2008
Rhode Island	March 4, 2008
Texas	March 4, 2008
Vermont	March 4, 2008
Puerto Rico	March 9, 2008
Mississippi	March 11, 2008

## WHEN DOES MY PASSPORT EXPIRE?

If you cannot answer this question, it may be sooner than you think! It is easy to forget when it is time to renew your passport; but the time to find out it has expired is not at the airport. If you are planning holiday travel, check your passport and those of your family to make sure they are still valid. For dual nationals who are citizens of the United States as well as another country, it is important that you use your valid

U.S. passport to travel to the U.S. Under U.S. law, U.S. citizens must enter and exit the U.S. using a U.S. passport.

For more information on applying for a U.S. passport, forms and a wealth of other international travel information, please visit: <http://travel.state.gov/>.

**TRAVELERS REMINDED OF NEW DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS  
BEGINNING JANUARY 31, 2008.**

***Documents Proving Citizenship and Identity Will be Required When Entering The United States Through Land and Sea Ports of Entry***

*The following is a joint release by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security:*

The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remind the traveling public that as of Jan. 31, 2008, all adult travelers will be required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, and proof of identity, such as a driver's license, when entering the United States through land and sea ports of entry. DHS will be issuing a notice in the Federal Register formally announcing the change.

This change is a necessary step to prepare travelers and ease the transition to the future requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). WHTI proposes to establish documentation requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada, and Bermuda. As recommended by the 9/11 Commission, Congress enacted WHTI in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. WHTI will result in both enhanced security and increased facilitation across the border once implemented. During this transition, DHS and the Department of State are working diligently to minimize the impact on legitimate trade and travel.

Currently, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers may accept oral declarations of citizenship from U.S. and Canadian citizens seeking entry into the United States through a land or sea border. However, as of January 31, 2008:

- Oral declarations of citizenship alone will no longer be accepted.
- U.S. and Canadian citizens ages 19 and older will need to present a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, along with proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or naturalization certificate.
- Children ages 18 and under will only be required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate.
- Passports and trusted traveler program cards - NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST - will continue to be accepted for cross-border travel.

All existing nonimmigrant visa and passport requirements will remain in effect and will not be altered by this change.

The Department reminds the public that the current turnaround time for a passport is four to six weeks, so Americans planning international travel may wish to apply now. For information on obtaining a U.S. Passport visit [travel.state.gov/passport](http://travel.state.gov/passport). Specific documentation requirements for land, sea and air travel may be found at

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready\\_set\\_go/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready_set_go/). To learn more about NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST, visit [www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted\\_traveler/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted_traveler/).

## SEASON'S GREETINGS

As the Holiday Season is approaching, the American Embassy would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family healthy, joyful and bright holidays, and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.



This newsletter is an unofficial and informal source of practical information for American citizens residing in Macedonia. If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, please contact the Consular Section at (02) 311-6180, or at [consularskopje@state.gov](mailto:consularskopje@state.gov). This newsletter is also available on the American Citizens Services page of our website at <http://skopje.usembassy.gov>