



## Embassy of the United States

Bul. Ilinden bb.  
1000 Skopje  
(+389 2) 3116 180  
[consularskopje@state.gov](mailto:consularskopje@state.gov)  
<http://skopje.usembassy.gov>

# American Citizen Services Newsletter December 2006

<b>Safety and Security Situation</b>	1
<b>Upcoming Embassy Holidays</b>	2
<b>Are you traveling for the Holidays?</b>	2
<b>Holiday Security Awareness</b>	2
<b>Emergency Passports</b>	3
<b>Avian Influenza: How to Prepare for “Sheltering in Place”</b>	3
<b>New Procedures for Applying for Social Security Numbers</b>	4
<b>Social Security Numbers and Passport Applications</b>	5
<b>Season’s Greetings</b>	5

## SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION

While the security situation in Macedonia today is 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.

Recent acts of violence 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 Day – Monday, December 25
- New Year's Day – Monday and Tuesday, January 1 and 2
- Orthodox Christmas– Sunday, observed on Monday, January 8
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday – Monday, January 15
- Presidents' Day – Monday, February 19

## **ARE YOU TRAVELING FOR THE HOLIDAYS?**

Emergencies can happen while you are on vacation. If you are traveling in December, please remember to update your registration information online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>.

When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your foreign travel, the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By registering your trip, you help the Embassy or Consulate locate you when you might need them the most. Registration is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a part of your travel planning and security.

## **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.

Keep your perimeter gates, doors, and windows securely locked when no one is at home. Guard against pick pocketing and other crimes of opportunity, particularly since criminals may become more aggressive in their tactics during this period. Vehicles also represent an excellent target for criminals - not just the vehicle itself, but the items inside. Place all valuables out of sight. This includes bags, briefcases, and other containers that a criminal might imagine could hide something of value.

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.

## EMERGENCY PASSPORTS

We wish to remind all American citizens that emergency passports can only be issued in the event of a true emergency such as a sudden illness or the death of a family member. The U.S. emergency passport is not intended for long-term use in place of the standard 10-year validity biometric, machine-readable U.S. passport. Generally speaking, an emergency passport will not be issued to facilitate urgent business travel or travel for tourism. Please carefully review the validity of your current U.S. passport. Keep in mind that many countries and airlines require a minimum of six months' validity remaining on your passport for travel.

American travelers are recommended to check [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for various country entry requirements ahead of time.

Regular passports are issued within 10 calendar days after the U.S. Embassy receives the application.

## AVIAN INFLUENZA: HOW TO PREPARE FOR 'SHELTERING-IN-PLACE'

Health professionals are concerned that the continued spread of a highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) virus among animals in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe has the potential to significantly threaten human health. If a virus such as H5N1 mutates and spreads easily from one person to another, avian influenza may break out globally. While there are **no reports of sustained human-to-human transmission** of avian influenza, the U.S. government and international health agencies are preparing for a possible pandemic.

Depending on the severity of a pandemic, commercial airlines might drastically curtail or even cease operations. Travel restrictions could also impede people from returning to the United States or fleeing to other countries. For these reasons, it may make more sense to "**shelter-in-place**" (i.e., stay home and practice "social distancing" to avoid contagion) for an appropriate period of time.

Due to varying conditions overseas, Americans abroad should evaluate their situation and prepare emergency supplies accordingly (non-perishable food, potable water, medicines, etc.) for the possibility of **sheltering-in-place for at least two and up to twelve weeks**. Water purification techniques such as boiling, filtering, and/or adding chlorine to locally available rainwater, swimming pools, lakes, rivers, and wells may replace the need to store large quantities of water. We regret that **the Embassy will not be able to provide food, water, or medicine (including Tamiflu)** to the general population. However, Tamiflu is currently available at the Biolek Pharmacy in the Leptokaria Shopping Center (phone: 02-306-3315).

**What can you do on a daily basis?** Cover your cough. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to eradicate viruses and bacteria or apply a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content when soap and water are not available. Stay home if you are sick. Vaccinate yourself against seasonal flu.

Travel: American citizens living in or traveling to countries with human or animal cases of H5N1 virus should consider the **potential risks**. Keep informed of the latest medical guidance and practical information and plan accordingly. Consult <http://www.travel.state.gov> for the latest tips on international travel.

On-Line Resources: Detailed information about suggested preparations, as well as planning checklists, are available on the U.S. government's one-stop website on pandemic influenza (<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>), the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en/>), and the Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov>) websites.

## **NEW PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS**

Effective September 25, 2006, new procedures are in place if you are reporting the birth of your child and want a Social Security number issued to him or her. You must complete a form SS-5-FS, and submit proof of both parents' identity and proof of the child's identity to the Embassy's Consular Section. The form SS-5-FS will be provided to you when you register your child, or can be downloaded from [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

All of the following must be submitted with the SS-5-FS:

- The passport or military ID card or driver's license of the parent signing the SS-5-FS
- The child's foreign birth certificate
- The child's Consular Report of Birth Abroad

And one document from the list below, for the child:

- Passport
- U.S. military dependent ID card

You will be required to submit the completed form and the original documents (no photocopies) to the Consular Section. All original documents will be returned to you immediately. The Social Security number card will be mailed to you in approximately 6 to 9 weeks.

If you have any questions, please see [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) . If you have a specific inquiry, please contact the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy Skopje on [consularskopje@state.gov](mailto:consularskopje@state.gov)

## **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AND PASSPORT APPLICATIONS**

The American Embassy and the Consulates remind passport applicants that they must provide their social security numbers on the passport application, or otherwise indicate that they have no social security number. Many passport applications that we receive have blank, incomplete, or obviously phony social security numbers.

If the person does not have a social security number, they should enter 0's in box 5. Applicants who fail to provide a valid social security number are subject to a 500 dollar penalty enforced by the IRS. If you do not remember your or your child's Social Security Number, please visit our web site for instructions on how to obtain it from the Social Security Administration.

The Embassy reminds you that the instruction labeled "FEDERAL TAX LAW" on the passport application complies with the Privacy Act.

## **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>