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## **American Citizen Services Newsletter June 2005**

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### **FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM THE CONSUL**

After three years, the time has come for me to say farewell. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in Macedonia and am able to look back with pride on many accomplishments. Here in Embassy Skopje's Consular Section we have an outstanding team of officers and local staff trained and eager to assist American citizens in need – whether the need is for the routine replacement of a passport or medical evacuation in the event of an emergency.

Our highest priority in the Consular Section remains the provision of services in support of the welfare and safety of American citizens abroad. I hope you will take the time to review the safety and security information provided in this quarterly newsletter. Please share this newsletter with other American citizens you know who are resident in Macedonia and if they are not registered with us, please encourage them to do so.

It has been a pleasure for me to travel around Macedonia and meet with many of you. I wish you all continued success here in Macedonia or wherever you may find yourself in the years ahead.

With thanks,

Julie Ruterbories  
Consul

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION**

While the security situation in Macedonia today is stable, all travelers should be alert for unusual behavior and other possible indicators that something out of the ordinary is in progress. 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 several recent incidents of home and vehicle break-ins. We remind all American citizens to lock their windows and doors at all times and not leave any valuables in plain sight in their car.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where current [Worldwide Caution Public Announcements](#), [Travel Warnings and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

## **SECURITY AWARENESS: PROTECT YOUR HOME WHILE ON VACATION**

No home security system is 100% accurate. One of the easiest ways to protect your home and property while away on vacation is to create the impression that someone is still at home.

One good way to create this "lived in" look while you are gone is with the help of a neighbor. Of course, arranging to have a friend or relative check your home periodically is a good idea too. But your neighbors next door can provide around-the-clock security, simply by watching out for any unusual or suspicious activity around your residence, and then calling the police if they think something is wrong.

A vacation or weekend away from home should be a pleasant experience for you and your family. You can make it more enjoyable and carefree by taking a few simple steps to reduce the possibility that your home might be broken into while you are gone.

- Be careful about who you tell that you are going to be leaving town. It's especially important to not talk to strangers about your trip.
- Don't let uncollected newspapers and mail pile up. Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to pick them up for you.
- Store jewelry and other valuables in a safe place.
- Prior to departure check all doors and windows to ensure all are locked.
- Do not close blinds and drapes. A "closed up" house is a sure sign of being unoccupied.
- Disconnect Appliances. Eliminate possible fires by disconnecting all nonessential electrical appliances.
- Get a trusted friend or relative to "house sit." Or, make sure your neighbors know your plans.
- Leave a car parked in the driveway, or ask a neighbor to park in your driveway.
- Leave a house key and a number with a trusted friend or neighbor where you can be reached in case of an emergency.

## UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

The Embassy will be closed for the following holidays in the next six months:

- Independence Day – Monday, July 4
- Ilinden Uprising Day-Tuesday, August 2
- American Labor Day – Monday, September 5
- Macedonian Independence Day – Thursday, September 8
- Columbus Day – Monday, October 10
- Macedonian People's Uprising Against Fascism – Tuesday, October 11
- Veterans' Day – Friday, November 11
- Thanksgiving day – Thursday, November 24

A full list of all of our holiday closings for 2005 is available online at <http://skopje.usembassy.gov/holidays/non-working%20days.html>

## COMMUNITY JULY 4 PICNIC

This year's Community July 4 Picnic will be held on Saturday, July 9. More information and details will be coming in the following week as a separate message.

## HOW TO REPLACE A DAMAGED OR MUTILATED PASSPORT

Traveling with a secure passport protects your personal security and protects U.S. national security. We cannot add visa pages to U.S. passports that are damaged. In addition, travelers using damaged passports may be detained, denied admission and/or otherwise inconvenienced when traveling abroad. Security features of a U.S. passport may be impacted by damage to the biographic/photograph page, deterioration to passport stitching due to multiple visa pages inserts etc. When a passport is damaged, a new passport application must be made, even if the damaged passport still shows a distant validity date.

Applications to replace damaged passports must be made in person at the American Embassy in Skopje. An applicant presenting a damaged/mutilated passport may be asked for additional proof of identity and citizenship as follows:

**Proof of Citizenship:** a U.S. birth certificate; Naturalization Certificate; Certificate of Citizenship; Consular Report of Birth Abroad; **or** an expired U.S. passport.

**Proof of Identity:** a valid passport of any country; a valid driver's license with photograph and signature; a national identity card with photograph and signature; a valid U.S. or State government ID card; **or** a U.S. military ID card.

For more information on passport application procedures, please see: <http://travel.state.gov>

## LIGHTERS PROHIBITED AT AIRPORTS AND ON AIRPLANES

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has announced that all lighters will be prohibited from sterile areas of airports and onboard aircraft beginning April 14, 2005. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 requires that "butane" lighters be added to TSA's Prohibited Items List.

After carefully evaluating the security threat, Congressional intent and operational considerations, TSA determined that passengers should be prohibited from carrying all lighters on their person or in carry-on luggage in the sterile areas of airports or onboard an airplane. The policy will be fully enforced beginning April 14, 2005. All lighters will be banned from sterile areas beyond security checkpoints at airports. This includes, for example, butane, absorbed-fuel (Zippo-type), electric/battery-powered and novelty lighters.

The Department of Transportation classifies lighters as hazardous materials and prohibits them from being stowed in checked baggage. TSA will dispose of lighters brought to checkpoints. Passengers at some airports may be able to ship them via a private company for a fee, but TSA strongly urges passengers to thoroughly inspect their carry-on and checked baggage for these items before going to the airport. See <http://www.tsa.gov> for additional information.

## NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAVELERS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

U.S. citizens traveling to and from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Panama, Mexico and Canada will soon be required to have a passport or other secure, accepted document to enter or re-enter the United States. This is a change from prior travel requirements and will affect all U.S. Citizens entering the United States from countries within the Western Hemisphere who do not currently possess valid passports. This new requirement will also affect certain foreign nationals who currently are not required to present a passport to travel to the United States. Most Canadian citizens, citizens of the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda, and to a lesser degree, Mexican citizens will be affected by the implementation of this requirement.

The travel initiative requirements will be rolled out in phases, providing as much advance notice as possible to the affected public to enable them to meet the terms of the new guidelines. The proposed implementation timeline is as follows:

- December 31, 2005 – Passport or other accepted document required for all travel (air/sea) to or from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Central and South America.
- December 31, 2006 – Passport or other accepted document required for all air and sea travel to or from Mexico and Canada.
- December 31, 2007 – Passport or other accepted document required for all air, sea and land border crossings.



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, xt. 3179 or at [consularskopje@state.gov](mailto:consularskopje@state.gov). This and all future newsletters will also be available on the ACS page of our Internet site at <http://skopje.usembassy.gov>