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## **American Citizen Services Newsletter September 2005**

In this issue:

- ⇒ **Welcome Message from the Consul**
- ⇒ **Safety and Security Situation**
- ⇒ **Upcoming Holidays**
- ⇒ **Latest News on E-Passports**
- ⇒ **Dog Bites: What Should I Do if a Dog Bites Me?**
- ⇒ **“PHISHING” on the Internet Information Stream**
- ⇒ **Register to Vote for Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Elections**
- ⇒ **Federal Government Service Locator: FirstGov.gov**

### **WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE CONSUL**

Greetings. I arrived in July 2005 to begin serving as Chief of the Consular Section here in Skopje, Macedonia. I am very much looking forward to spending the next three years here.

Our highest priority in the Consular Section has always been, and continues to be, the provision of services in support of the welfare and safety of Americans abroad. It is important that all American citizens register with the Embassy in order that we might contact you in the event of an emergency. We are also here to help with routine services such as passport replacement or notarial services.

I look forward to having the opportunity to meet with many of you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Kimberly McDonald

## SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION

In July there were attacks on two police stations in Macedonia. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, unknown persons fired multiple rifle rounds and two rifle-mounted grenades at the police station in Vratnica, north of Tetovo. Late on the evening of July 15<sup>th</sup>, an explosive device was detonated at a police station near the Bit Pazar market in Skopje. There were no injuries in either incident.

At this time, there is no information of any specific threat to U.S. Embassy personnel or Americans in Macedonia. Please use the following information to enhance your security awareness.

**Situational awareness is key.** Be aware of your surroundings at all times, and trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, trust that instinct and remove yourself from the situation.

**Vary your routes and times of travel.** By varying your routine, you make it more difficult for anyone who may be trying to plan an attack.

**Make an effort to be conspicuously security conscious.** For example, conduct a visual inspection of your car before leaving the house in the morning (walk around the car, look for anything out of place, etc.) This will not only alert you to any tampering, but also will demonstrate to anyone who may be watching that you are security conscious and not a soft target, and that they should direct their efforts elsewhere.

On August 2, 2005 the Department of State issued an updated Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, superceding the previous caution issued on March 9, 2005. 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.

## UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

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

- Columbus Day – Monday, October 10
- Macedonian People's Uprising Against Fascism – Tuesday, October 11
- Veterans' Day – Friday, November 11
- Thanksgiving day – Thursday, November 24
- Christmas Day – Monday, December 26 (observed)

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

## LATEST NEWS ON E-PASSPORTS

The proposed Electronic Passport will be the same as a regular passport with the addition of a small contactless integrated circuit (computer chip) embedded in the back cover. The chip will securely store the same data visually displayed on the photo page of the passport, and will additionally include a digital photograph. The inclusion of the digital photograph will enable

biometric comparison, through the use of facial recognition technology at international borders. The U.S. "e-passport" will also have a new look, incorporating additional anti-fraud and security features.

Please note: if you currently hold a passport without an electronic chip, it will still be valid for the full extent of its validity period. This means you will not/not be required to exchange your current valid passport for an e-passport once the e-passports enter general circulation.

For more information, including a preview of the e-passport's new design, please visit: [http://travel.state.gov/passport/eppt/eppt\\_2498.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/eppt/eppt_2498.html)

## **DOG BITES: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A DOG BITES ME?**

Here are some things you should do to take immediate care of a wound caused by a dog bite:

- **Wash the wound area gently with soap and water and leave it under running tap water at least ten minutes.**
- **Apply pressure with a clean towel to the injured part to stop the bleeding.**
- **Apply a sterile bandage to the wound.**
- **Keep the injury elevated above the level of the heart to slow swelling and prevent infection.**
- **Seek medical assistance as soon as possible after the exposure.**

If you reside in Skopje, you should immediately go to

**The Clinic for Infectious Diseases**

**University State Hospital**

**Vodnjanska street, b.b.**

**1000 Skopje**

**tel: (02) 3147-147**

It is very likely that you will undergo a series of rabies shots and a tetanus injection.

If you reside in another city or village, you should visit the Department of Infectious Diseases at the nearest Medical Center.

If you know the owner of the dog that bit you, ask for the pet's vaccination record (record of shots) and take it to the vet doctor for a certification of the dog's health.

## **How can I prevent dog bites?**

Here are some things you can do to prevent bites:

- Do not approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Never leave a young child alone with a pet.
- Do not try to separate fighting animals.
- Avoid sick animals and animals that you don't know.
- Leave animals alone while they are eating.
- Keep pets on a leash when in public.
- Select your family pet carefully, and be sure to keep your pet's vaccination up-to-date.

## **“PHISHING” ON THE INTERNET INFORMATION STREAM**

Computer hackers continue to develop more sophisticated tools for disrupting computer systems and stealing information. However, the simplest method for obtaining the information necessary to cause havoc is by using the intended victim himself to provide the information and access desired by the hacker. The Internet, for all its obvious advantages, remains an excellent vehicle for hackers to carry out their destructive plans.

Recently, the Department of State notified its employees of two new, popular “Phishing” scams targeting its employees. Phishing is a form of social engineering that uses e-mails or websites to entice the recipient into providing personal or financial information, which can then be used to steal that individual's identity. E-mails from seemingly reputable companies, including e-mails allegedly sent from well-known banking institutions, request account information, such as account numbers, date of birth, and social security number, while hinting that failure to provide such information will result in some negative outcome, perhaps the closure of an active credit card account, for example.

Another popular scam involves sending an attachment or hyperlink as part of an e-mail. The unwitting recipient either opens the e-mail attachment or clicks on the hyperlink, unleashing some type of malicious code, such as a Trojan program. This type of program could collect user names and passwords for on-line accounts and transactions, scan network drives and collect critical system information, infect the computer and compromise other machines on the network, download other virulent programs, or upload documents and data to a remote computer. These e-mail attachments or hyperlinks may appear as legitimate government or corporate communications.

A sharp eye can identify some indicators of deception. Some possible clues are misspellings, other e-mail addresses in the “To” or “CC” line similar to yours, incomplete contact information from the alleged sender, and internet addresses with foreign suffixes, especially if the e-mail claims to be coming from a US government or business entity. The website URL may provide another clue. Malicious website names can look virtually identical to a legitimate site except for a slight variation in spelling or use of a different domain (for example, .com versus .net). Verifying the legitimacy of a website or e-mail request can be done through contacting the company directly. Regardless, providing personal information, account or PIN numbers, and passwords in response to unknown or unsolicited e-mail requests is a risky business. Utilizing a commercial firewall program is another protective measure against these irritating and potentially damaging intruders into your computer system.

A successful hacking attack can cause thousands of dollars in property damage to computer and network systems, loss of valuable proprietary or classified information, and destroy

personal credit ratings. It is incumbent on YOU, the user, to educate and protect yourself from these pernicious attacks against a safe computing environment.

## **REGISTER TO VOTE FOR NOV. 8<sup>TH</sup> U.S. ELECTIONS**

Election day this year is November 8th and while it is considered an "off year" election, there are still many important state and local races to consider, including ones for governor of New Jersey and Virginia. In order to vote you must be registered. Regulations for registering vary state by state. A great source of information for overseas voters, including registration forms for all 50 states and links to election related sites can be found at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). You can also find voter registration ballots at the U.S. Embassy.

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE LOCATOR: FIRSTGOV.GOV**

The U.S. Government's official service locator, [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov), contains information related to local, state and federal government issues including how to obtain a copy of your birth certificate, contact elected officials, find government benefits, renew a driver's license, check the status of an immigration case and much more. Please look there first before contacting us for information.



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>