

Consular News for American Citizens in Egypt

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES, CONSULAR SECTION

U.S. Embassy, Cairo

Summer 2004

--Farewell Message from the Consul General

The last three years have been a very challenging time for the world and for us as American citizens abroad, beginning with the shocking tragedy of the 9/11 attack in the United States and continuing through other serious regional events, including war, and its aftermath, in Iraq. Here in Egypt, we have watched with caution but, thankfully, have continued to live and visit in safety among Egyptians who welcome us and judge us as individuals. For me, it has been three of the most rewarding years of my life, professionally and personally, and so I prepare to move on to my next assignment with a good deal of sadness at leaving behind so many new friends and special places.

From a consular perspective, we have worked hard to get in touch with all of you, the American citizens of Egypt, significantly expanding our warden network and other forms of outreach, including this newsletter. We dramatically increased the number of Americans registered with the Embassy and provided information and services in a variety of fora including our monthly service visits to Alexandria and regular sessions at schools, AUC, and other interested institutions that are centers of activity for the American community. We have done our best to ensure that you know what we know about security and other issues of mutual interest so that you can make informed decisions on matters of concern. We continue to welcome registrations and inquiries from all members of the American community and want to remind you that we are always available, both in emergencies and for routine services. Details on how to reach us are provided at the end of this newsletter.

I want to take this opportunity to say what a pleasure it has been to meet and get to know many of you during my time as Consul General. I would also like to let you know that my successor, Peter Kaestner, and his family are looking forward very much to their arrival in August when Peter will take up the reins as Consul General for the next several years. They are, in my opinion, very fortunate to be coming to live in such a wonderful country with such enjoyable fellow

and local citizens.

Please be assured that, regardless of the routine comings and goings of your Embassy's staff, myself included, the Embassy's mission vis-à-vis American citizens remains the same - to stay sharply focused on your welfare and safety while providing you with the services you need and expect from your government. We have no more important task.

My thanks and best wishes to you all,

Ann S. Syrett
Consul General

-----It's Your Future... Vote For It!

The U.S. general election is quickly approaching. The political party national conventions are just around the corner, and then it's the bell lap before the finish. Remember that initial registration for voting and application for absentee ballots need to be completed well in advance of the election. Absentee ballots begin to be mailed out 30-45 days before the election; i.e., around the middle of September. So don't put it off! The Embassy has Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA) and can drop them into the U.S. postal system for you if you fill them out and leave them at the Embassy.

Also remember that it is county, and in some cases city, registrars who maintain voter lists. Therefore the FPCA needs to be mailed to the county, or city, registrar of the state in which you are domiciled. Some states require that the FPCA be notarized; this service is performed free of charge at the Embassy. Loads of information about the elections in general and your state's registration and election in particular is available at the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website, www.fvap.gov. The Voting Assistance Guide is a great resource for voting information and can be accessed from this website.

It's still not too late, but it soon will be....

-----*Passport Corner*

Passport Renewals. We have noticed an increased number of American travelers coming to the Embassy to renew their passports within a week or two of their departure. It appears that many have made travel plans but have forgotten to look at their passports to make sure they are still valid. We recommend that, if travel is in your plans for the near future, you take a quick look at your family's passports. It will prevent much stress in those days leading up to your trip. Even though the average time for new passports to be ready is 7-10 days, pad the time by a couple of weeks just in case the unexpected happens.

Passports for youngsters. New regulations have been in force for over a year now, but they are still taking some by surprise. All children under 14 years of age are required to appear with both parents whenever a passport is renewed or another passport action is taken, such as having additional pages added to a passport. Both parents will take the oath and sign for the child until he or she reaches 14 years of age. In addition, a copy of the child's original birth certificate is required to be submitted with each application.

Child Support Payments. If a person is certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to be in arrears of child support payments in excess of \$5,000, he or she is ineligible to receive a U.S. passport. If this applies to you, we recommend that you contact the appropriate state child support enforcement agency to make payment arrangements **before** applying for a passport. Please note that it can take 2-3 weeks from the time you make payment arrangements with the state agency until your name is removed from HHS' electronic list.

Please direct any questions to the appropriate state child support enforcement agency. Contact information for state agencies is available through the HHS - State Child Support Enforcement Web Site at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs>.

-----*Travel to Libya*

We have received many inquiries concerning travel to Libya. The following is an excerpt from the Department of State's Travel Warning for Libya dated March 5, 2004.

Quote: The U.S. recently lifted restrictions on the use of U.S. passports for travel to Libya. While Libya has taken steps to cooperate in the global war on

terrorism, the Libyan Government remains on the U.S. Government's State Sponsors of Terrorism List.

There is no U.S. Embassy in Libya. Therefore, the U.S. Government is unable to provide any assurances of the safety of travel to Libya by U.S. citizens. U.S. Government interests are represented by the Government of Belgium, which, as a protecting power, can provide only limited emergency services to U.S. citizens.

Americans who decide to travel to Libya despite this Travel Warning should exercise a high level of caution. Updated information on travel and security in Libya may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States, or, from overseas, 1-317-472-2328. Those travelers should consult the Department of State's latest Consular Information sheet for Libya, which includes further details on the Treasury Department sanctions, and the current Worldwide Caution and Middle East and North Africa Public Announcements, which are available on the Department's Internet site at <http://travel.state.gov>. *End quote.*

Current Libyan policy requires that tourists travel to Libya with advance authorization through a licensed travel agency in Libya. (A list of such agencies is available at the Libyan embassy.) The authorization is then forwarded to the Libyan Embassy in Cairo. Visas are required.

-----*Taking a Pet Home With You?*

There is a series of steps that must be followed before one will be permitted to take a pet out of Egypt. Allow two weeks before the date of travel for this process. Since dogs and cats are the most common pets to accompany travelers home, the steps for these pets are as follows:

- Ask your veterinarian for two documents: a certificate of good health and a rabies record
- Take these documents to the Wildlife Office (*Maktab al-Haya al-Bareya*) at Cairo International Airport for a second letter of good health. This office is located near gate 35 between the old and new airports.

- Go to the Veterinary Quarantine Office (*Maktab al-Hagr al-Betary*), also at the airport, for an International Health Certificate. This office is located near the Wildlife Office.
- Check with your airline regarding whether pets are permitted to travel in the cabin or not. Obtain the proper container for your pet.

(Note that Egypt will not issue certificates to dogs under three months of age.)

If your plans require a return to Egypt after visiting another country with your pet, remember that you will be required to present an International Health Certificate from the country visited.

For questions on other pets please contact the airport's Veterinary Quarantine Office at (02)265-3996 or (02)418-1150. For information about customs regulations upon arrival in the U.S., visit: www.cbp.gov/ImageCache/cgov/content/publications/pets_2epdf/v1/pets.pdf or www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/petravel.html

-----*Having a Baby in Egypt?*
Don't Forget to Register the Birth

Babies born in Egypt need to be registered with the government within 15 days of birth in order to be issued an official birth certificate. Approach the Government Health Office for the jurisdiction in which the child was born with the details of the birth and request a birth certificate. If the birth is not registered in the first 15 days, bureaucratic requirements are triggered and what might have taken only days, will suddenly stretch into several weeks and possibly months. This unexpected discovery can be extremely disruptive to one's plans.

A local birth certificate is required in order for the Embassy to issue a Report of Birth Abroad and, subsequently, a passport for the child. Without it, there is no part of the process that can move forward. A letter from the hospital or delivering doctor is not enough to report the birth of the baby. So be sure that, if you plan to have your baby in Egypt, you save yourself the unnecessary hassles of navigating through the Egyptian bureaucracy by registering the child within the first 15 days after birth.

-----*Reminder about Mandatory Military Service*

Under current law in Egypt, citizenship is passed on through one's father. Therefore, regardless of where one is born or where one has lived his whole life, by Egyptian law if one's father is Egyptian, or is

a dual national, then he (the son) is automatically Egyptian. This is the case even if his existence has never been recorded previously with the Egyptian government. So when a young man of military age, whom the Egyptian government considers Egyptian, tries to leave the country without performing his mandatory military service, the authorities may prevent his departure, unless he obtains a military service waiver from the military authorities.

What triggers this need for the waiver? If one stays longer than the six months regularly given to those of Egyptian origin, the military requirements kick in. There is absolutely nothing the Embassy can do to request that the host government waive these requirements. So if you are a young man with Egyptian roots, take care not to overstay the time granted upon entering the country or be prepared to seek the necessary waiver.

-----*Upcoming Consular Visits*

Consular services for American citizens are available once a month in Alexandria at the renovated and newly re-opened American Center, 3 Pharana Street, Azarita, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Upcoming consular visits to Alexandria are scheduled for the following Sundays:

- June 27
- July 25
- August 29
- September 26

For details of the services available during ACS hours in Alexandria, check the Embassy website at: usembassy.egnet.net/consular.

-----*ACS Contact Information*

Telephone: 797-2301 (Sunday - Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.); Fax: 797-3602
Walk-in hours 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Sunday - Thursday. No appointment required.
After-hours Emergency Assistance: 797-3300
Recorded Warden Message: 797-3000
(Remember: if you are calling from outside Cairo, dial 02 before the number.)
E-mail: consularcairo@state.gov
Website: www.usembassy.egnet.net

American Citizen Services Unit
Christopher E. Rich, Chief
Consular Section
Embassy of the United States of America
5 Latin America Street
Garden City, Cairo

-----*Useful Resources on the Web*

The U.S. Embassy in Egypt
www.usembassy.egnet.net

The U.S. Department of State
www.state.gov

The Dept. of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs
www.travel.state.gov

FirstGov - the central resource/search page for
federal and state government information
www.firstgov.gov

The Internal Revenue Service
www.irs.gov

The Social Security Administration
www.ssa.gov

The Department of Homeland Security
www.dhs.gov

Destination USA - general visa information site
unitedstatesvisas.gov

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
www.uscis.gov

U.S. Customs
www.customs.gov