



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

December 23, 1999

Dear Ms. McGovern:

As the Year 2000 rollover period approaches, I am writing to you to review our current Consular information about Y2K and to draw your attention to our contingency plans to address any problems that might occur.

Since you received our previous letter from the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs in August, there have been many developments in the Department's Y2K Consular information strategy. This has been an active year in which we made real strides to get the word out to you, our customers, through a wide variety of outreach efforts, including public speaking opportunities, media interviews, U.S. embassy town hall meetings, and extensive expansion of our web site's Y2K and Crisis Abroad features.

On September 14, our Consular Information Sheets for all countries were updated to include country-specific Y2K information. That material has been reviewed and updated where needed in the past two months via our web site. On October 29, the Department of State issued Y2K-related Travel Warnings for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, explaining that the Department granted voluntary authorized departure from those countries effective December 26, for eligible U.S. Government family members and employees who can be spared from duty. The October 29 Travel Warnings suggest U.S. citizens consider deferring travel to those countries and further suggest that private U.S. citizens in those countries review their personal circumstances and make appropriate contingency plans, including possible departure.

On December 21, the Department of State issued a Worldwide Caution Public Announcement alerting U.S.

Ms. Elissa M. McGovern
Associate Director for Liaison
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)
Suite 1200
1400 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

citizens that the U.S. Government believes that terrorists may be planning to conduct attacks including against official and non-official Americans, in and around the New Year period (from now through mid-January 2000) with particular emphasis on locations where large groups of people may congregate for millennial or religious festivities. American citizens overseas during the period are urged to review their security practices, to remain vigilant to their surroundings and to exercise caution. American citizens should avoid large crowds and gatherings, keep a low profile, and vary routes and times of all required travel. On December 14, the Department also issued a Worldwide Public Announcement about the Y2K problem, focusing on personal preparedness, medical emergencies, and suggestions of actions U.S. citizens may wish to take at this time. Copies of these documents are enclosed.

From December 31 through January 5, the Department will have a Y2K rollover Task Force in operation. Part of that Task Force's responsibility will be to update information about the current Y2K situation abroad, as appropriate.

Please note that:

- The best way to get up-to-date information from the State Department, both at the present time and during the Y2K rollover period itself, is to go to our website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

- General information may also be obtained from our automated phone service for Y2K, (202) 833-2520, where callers can get status reports on the Y2K situation in countries abroad.

We are using a recorded system to allow our live-operator Y2K Consular team to assist U.S. citizens with Y2K-related emergencies abroad that pose a danger to their life or health. General inquiries will be referred to our web page or automated phone service. This procedure will enable us to keep the public informed using modern information dissemination techniques, while focusing our limited personnel resources on critical cases involving the protection and welfare of U.S. citizens abroad. Emergency inquiries will be referred to our Consular teams at (202) 647-0900.

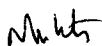
U.S. citizens abroad should remain in contact with U.S. embassies and consulates and monitor web pages of the Department of State and our embassies abroad. In the event of serious Y2K communications disruptions, U.S. citizens should also monitor Voice of America (VOA) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio broadcasts.

~~In order to be prepared for potential worldwide~~
 problems arising from the Y2K computer bug, U.S. visa issuing posts overseas will not be open to the public for processing nonimmigrant visas for the first two business days of the new year. Additionally, those posts that process immigrant visas will not be scheduling public processing of immigrant visas for the first two weeks of ~~the new year. Please note that those dates may vary~~ depending on the local work week. Foreign travelers requiring nonimmigrant or immigrant visa services should plan accordingly. In the event of an urgent need for a visa to the United States during the time worldwide visa services are suspended, foreign travelers should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

We are confident that our primary mission -- ensuring the protection and welfare of U.S. citizens abroad -- will be met. We hope that the New Year transition is a positive experience for the traveling public and for U.S. citizens residing abroad. Be assured that the Department and our embassies and consulates stand ready to assist U.S. citizens.

We encourage you to bring this information to your constituent groups to ensure the widest possible dissemination. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance. We look forward to working with you in the coming year on other challenges.

Sincerely,



Maura Harty
 Acting Assistant Secretary
 Bureau of Consular Affairs

Enclosures: