

## Department of State

## § 72.28

personal estates of its military and civilian personnel who have died abroad. However, when no representative of the Coast Guard, or other authorized person is present at the time of death, the consular officer should take possession of the personal estate and hold it for disposition in accordance with instructions from the Commandant, United States Coast Guard. No fees should be charged for services so rendered (§ 72.54). Instructions in this section do not apply to the personal estates of dependents of Coast Guard personnel. The estates of such persons should be disposed of in the manner prescribed by §§ 72.28 to 72.51, if no legal representative is present.

### § 72.25 Responsibility in case of citizens dying on the high seas.

(a) *Consular responsibility not provided by statute.* There is no express provision of law authorizing the consular officer to take possession and dispose of the personal estate of a citizen of the United States (not a seaman) who has died on the high seas.

(b) *When death occurs on board vessel of United States registry.* If the death occurred on board a vessel of the United States, the master of the vessel, in the absence of a legal representative or other authorized person (see §§ 72.18 and 72.19), should be requested to take custody and return the personal estate to the shipping company in the United States for forwarding to the legal representative or other authorized person.

(c) *When death occurs on board vessel of foreign registry.* Death on board a vessel of foreign registry is considered to have occurred in the territory of the country of the ship's registry, and the estate laws of that country are applicable in such cases. In the absence of a legal representative or other authorized person (see §§ 72.18 and 72.19), the consular officer should take possession and dispose of the personal estate, provided that the laws of the country of assignment as well as the laws of the country of the ship's registry permit. The procedure in such cases is identical with that followed in the disposition of the estate of any United States citizen who may have died within the consular district, except that no fees should be charged for services rendered (§ 72.55).

### § 72.26 Responsibility in case of seamen.

See §§ 85.4 to 85.9 of this chapter for regulations regarding the disposition of the personal estates of seamen who have died while serving as members of the crew of a vessel of the United States. The consular officer should take possession and dispose of the personal estates of United States citizens who have died while serving as seamen on board foreign vessels, in the manner prescribed by § 72.25(c).

### § 72.27 Responsibility in case of Foreign Service personnel.

In the absence of a legal representative or other authorized person, the consular officer should take possession and dispose of the personal estates of deceased Foreign Service personnel in the manner prescribed by these regulations for other deceased citizens of the United States, except that no fee should be charged (§ 72.54). Travel orders issued by the Department for shipment of the personal effects of deceased officers and employees of the Foreign Service constitute only administrative authorization to transport the effects to a given destination, and in no way relieve the consular officer of the responsibility for satisfying himself of a claimant's right to the personal estate prior to shipment (§ 72.43).

### § 72.28 Effects to be taken into possession.

Although no limitations are placed by law (22 U.S.C. 1175) on the nature and extent of the personal property that should be taken into possession by the consular officer in the absence of a legal representative, experience has shown that the need exists to delimit by regulation the consular officer's obligations, but not his authority, in this regard. For example, the consular officer would not normally be expected to take physical possession of the articles covered in § 72.29 unless the items are of such nature and quantity as to be readily included with the personal effects of the nature described in this section, or unless such action, when physically possible, is necessary for the preservation or protection of the property. The consular officer does, however, have responsibility for taking

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reasonable steps to safeguard the articles of the personal estate which he does not take into possession until disposition can be effected by the legal representative. The personal effects which the consular officer would normally take into possession in any event include the following:

(a) Convertible assets, consisting of currency, redeemable transportation tickets, evidences of debts due and payable in the country of the officer's assignment, and any other instruments negotiable by the consular officer;

(b) Perishable property (including most foodstuffs), having commercial value;

(c) Luggage;

(d) Wearing apparel;

(e) Miscellaneous personal effects;

(f) Jewelry, heirlooms and articles of sentimental value;

(g) Non-negotiable instruments, defined as any document or instrument not saleable or transferrable by the consular officer, but which requires either the signature of the decedent or action by, or endorsement of, his legal representative; and includes transportation tickets not redeemed or redeemable by the consular officer, traveler's checks, promissory notes, evidences of debts not due and payable in the country of the officer's assignment, stocks, bonds or other similar instruments, bank books, books showing deposits in building and loan associations, etc. No fee is charged on non-negotiable instruments taken into possession by the consular officer; see § 72.53.

(h) Personal documents and papers.

### § 72.29 Nominal possessions; property not normally taken into possession.

(a) The taking of articles of personal property into nominal possession from local officials or other persons, for the explicit purpose of on-the-spot release to the "legal representative" as defined in § 72.18 against the latter's memorandum receipt discharging the consular officer without further accounting of any responsibility for articles so transferred by him, shall not be construed as the taking of custody by the officer. No fee shall be charged for the consular officer's service in effecting transfer of the articles in the manner described, provided that he is not re-

quired to prepare a consular inventory, appraise the articles, or list the contents of containers, and provided further that the effects are not taken in safekeeping upon official accountability.

(b) The consular officer is not normally expected to take physical possession, as provisional conservator, of livestock or of articles of personal property which may be found in residences and places of storage such as furniture, household effects and furnishings, bulky works of art, etc., unless the items are of such nature and quantity as to be readily included with the personal effects (§ 72.28), or unless such action, when physically possible, is necessary for the preservation or protection of the property, especially where the articles are of considerable intrinsic value; nor is the consular officer normally expected to take into physical possession motor vehicles, airplanes, or powered watercraft. Personal property not taken into possession should, however, be safeguarded by affixing the consular seal on the premises or on the property (whichever is appropriate), provided the laws of the country permit; or by taking reasonable steps to ensure that such items are placed in safekeeping (at the expense of the estate) until action can be taken by the legal representative. In order to protect the interests of the estate, the consular officer should prepare a list, in quintuplicate, of the articles not taken into physical custody, with indication of safeguarding measures taken, for submission with the inventory of effects which must be prepared for all items in his possession (see § 72.53). If the property which normally would be sealed by the consular officer is not immediately accessible, he should consider requesting the local authorities to seal the premises, or the property, or otherwise ensure that the property remains intact until consular seals can be placed thereon or the property placed in safe storage, or until the legal representative assumes responsibility therefor.

### § 72.30 Bank deposits in foreign countries.

The existence of bank deposits when known should be reported to the legal