

7 FAM 150 MISSING PERSONS

*(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)
(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)*

7 FAM 151 SUMMARY

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

- a. A missing person is a citizen or national who has not arrived at a location on the scheduled date and time.

For Example ...

If you receive a call about a citizen or national who was last seen trekking in a remote place and who is overdue at a destination, we would consider the person “missing”.

- b. For guidance on hostage/kidnapping situations, see 7 FAM 1800 Consular Crisis Management.
- c. For parental child abduction cases, see 7 FAM 1710.
- d. When useful and appropriate, the Department encourages the involvement of the ambassador or the deputy chief of mission and public affairs officers at the post. Coordination and communication with the Department is essential. (See 7 FAM 154.)

Examples of Missing Persons Cases ...

- **U.S. citizen known to have started to climb a mountain, but who never returned;**
- **U.S. citizen skier who disappeared after a run down a dangerous slope marked “dangerous” by the ski patrol;**
- **U.S. citizen on a day excursion boat trip who never returned;**
- **Developmentally challenged U.S. citizen adult who slipped away from care giver and disappeared;**
- **U.S. citizen participating in protest in host country who disappeared and may be held by local authorities or rival groups.**

7 FAM 152 PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

You should initiate a welfare and whereabouts check. For example:

- (1) Check the consular section's registration, Internet Based Registration System (IBRS), ACS systems for addresses or telephone numbers;
- (2) Check with local contacts or local addresses that the inquirer has provided;
- (3) Contact the local immigration authorities to determine if they have any record of entry or departure for the person in question;
- (4) Contact the local police department (foreigners division) to ask if it has any information on the missing person and to alert it to the problem;
- (5) Contact the National Tourist Bureau;
- (6) Check with appropriate hotels;
- (7) Check with airlines;
- (8) Check with local U.S. community leaders and associations; and
- (9) Contact local hospitals.

7 FAM 153 BROADENING SEARCH

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

If these checks fail to produce any information on the missing person and the Department has been informed of this and requests further efforts be made:

- (1) File a formal missing person's report with police;
- (2) Check with the coroner's office for unidentified bodies;
- (3) Ask for local media coverage gratis;
- (4) Contact wardens, missionary groups, etc.;
- (5) Ask the Peace Corps Director to alert volunteers;
- (6) Follow up any requests to local agencies to ensure that they conduct a thorough investigation; and
- (7) Contact consular officers of other countries who may have other contacts in remote locations.

7 FAM 154 REPORTING CASE TO DEPARTMENT

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

It is imperative that the post provide an immediate initial report to the Department via telephone when an incident affecting the safety of a U.S. citizen(s) or national(s) occurs. The telephone notification should be followed with a front channel cable as soon as possible, preferably the same day. The cable ensures that all interested bureaus in the Department have access to the latest information. Once the initial crisis has peaked you should continue to provide regular front channel reporting cables with CASC tags to the Department (CA/OCS/ACS) whenever there are any developments or when all possibilities of locating the U.S. citizen or national have been exhausted. Use of e-mail, fax and other alternative communications is also helpful, but does not take the place of reporting by cable. See 7 FAM 118 for further guidance on reporting welfare and whereabouts matters to the Department.

7 FAM 155 SEARCH AND RESCUE OPTIONS

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

- a. Search and rescue operations may be required when a U.S. citizen or national disappears and is feared “lost” following an accident, natural disaster or other incident. This subchapter discusses consular coordination with local search and rescue operations and how the U.S. Coast Guard and modern search and rescue techniques used by the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NOAA/NESDIS) may be useful. The subchapter also provides guidance on dealing with private services retained by families when host country search and rescue efforts fail.

Examples of Search and Rescue Operations:

Skiing accidents;

Mountain climbing accidents;

Boating accidents;

Small aircraft accidents;

Diving accidents;

Storms at sea; and

Other weather or geological incidents

- b. **Search and Rescue Resources:** Posts should be familiar with search and rescue capabilities in the host country from both official host country and private resources.
- c. **Action Sports Search and Rescue Resources:** There are a wide variety of search and rescue teams associated with action sports. For example, the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) administers the National Mountain Bike Patrol (NMBP) program, modeled after, and partially sponsored by the National Ski Patrol. Many of these organizations are also volunteers for FEMA (the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System). Also see the Federation International des Patrouilles de Ski (FIPS).
- d. **Missing Aircraft and Vessels:** For missing aircraft or vessels near the United States, the assistance of the U.S. Coast Guard in a search and rescue operation may be an option. Other modern search and rescue techniques have been used in search and rescue cases, including satellite imagery

See:

U.S. Coast Guard Search and Rescue

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Maritime Search and Rescue

NOAA Search and Rescue

U.N. Directory of International Search and Rescue Teams

- e. **Maritime Search and Rescue:** You should also be aware that there are a number of treaties and conventions on maritime search and rescue. See, for example, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (1979), as amended (summary of text) **as well as other information published by the International Maritime Organization.** **See:** SAR.8/Circ.1 - 7/4/2004 GLOBAL SAR PLAN containing information on the current availability of SAR (Search and Rescue) services.

7 FAM 156 WORKING WITH FAMILIES, EMPLOYERS, AND FRIENDS

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

If the U.S. citizen/national's last known location was in a foreign country, it is not unusual for family, employers, and friends to travel to the scene. Posts should assist these individuals as much as possible. The CA/OCS

Intranet site includes a variety of information that you may wish to refer to including guidance for families dealing with the media and working with local authorities. **Keep in mind:**

- (1) If the host country establishes a hotline or point of contact for families, let the Department know so we may relay this information to families in the United States;
- (2) CA/OCS/ACS may have an ad hoc team working on the incident, responding to family inquiries. It is useful to know what is going on at the scene and how you have been helping families and victims;
- (3) Try to establish a caseworker approach in which one consular officer at the post is the primary point of contact with one designated family member; and
- (4) Keep good records of your conversations.

7 FAM 157 COOPERATION WITH PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS RETAINED BY FAMILY

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

Families may retain the services of private investigators, companies using search dogs, and other services to attempt to locate the missing person. Posts should cooperate with such persons as much as possible and assist them in contacting local authorities. If post maintains a list of local private search and rescue organizations, it should be provided to the family. When in doubt, consult CA/OCS/ACS.

7 FAM 158 LOCATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF MISSING PERSON

(CT:CON-101; 02-10-2005)

- a. Post should monitor activities of host government officials to attempt to ensure that they are doing all that can be reasonably expected. This means that the consular officer will have to meet with appropriate officials, and request to read their reports if possible. The regional security officer (RSO), Legal Attache (Legatt) or other U.S. law enforcement authorities may be able to suggest approaches or sources of information.
- b. **Emergency Medical Assistance:** If a missing person is located alive, the post may coordinate with the family and local authorities to identify the person and ensure that he or she receives emergency medical or other assistance required. See 7 FAM 380 regarding Emergency Medical

and Dietary Assistance and medical repatriation loans.

- c. **Financial Responsibility for Medical Expenses:** Post should not give local authorities the impression that the U.S. embassy or consulate will assume financial responsibility for medical expenses beyond those provided for in 7 FAM 300.
- d. **Identification and Confirmation of Welfare:** When a post believes that it has located the missing U.S. citizen/national, the post must satisfy itself that the person found is the person sought. If necessary and feasible, the consular officer should personally interview the located person. If a third party speaking to the U.S. citizen/national declines to cooperate, the post should request the assistance of local authorities.
- e. **Unidentified Remains:** Post should continue to make inquiries of local authorities to determine if there are any unidentified remains in their custody. If host country authorities locate unidentified remains, the post may coordinate with family and local authorities to positively identify the remains. This may require DNA tests. See 7 FAM 200 and the CA/OCS Intranet site. The expenses for forensic examinations and/or DNA testing are not covered by the Department of State financial assistance programs (EMDA and repatriation loans). It should be made clear to host country authorities that the U.S. embassy or consulate and the Department are not responsible for the costs incurred. See 7 FAM 1800 regarding mass casualty events.

7 FAM 159 PRESUMPTIVE DEATH AND REPORT OF DEATH FRAUD FINDINGS

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See 7 FAM 200 for discussion of findings of presumptive death and fraudulent death reports.