VOL 1 NUM 3
JUNE 2000

AN OFFICE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS NEWSLETTER

consultations

To assist and inform the diplomatic community

GOVERNOR OF HAWAII SIGNS TAX EXEMPTION BILL INTO LAW

On April 26, Governor Benjamin Cayetano of Hawaii signed legislation, H.D. 1691, ensuring all eligible diplomatic and consular personnel will be exempt from state taxes in Hawaii.

"This bill accomplishes two things. First, Hawaii joins the rest of the nation's states by conforming with the U.S. State Department practice of exempting foreign diplomats and consular corps members from state taxes," said Governor Cayetano.

"Second, this bill will help to enhance Hawaii's image as an attractive international meeting place for foreign government officials looking to attend conferences like the Pacific Basin Economic Council."

The legislation includes exemption from excise tax, transient accommodation tax (hotel taxes), and use tax (on imports). The Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) will assist the State of Hawaii with its implementation and outreach activities to ensure the success of the program when it takes effect July 1.

To take advantage of this tax exemption, a mission or personal tax card issued by OFM is required. The entitlement category is shown on the color stripe of the bearer's tax card. For older tax cards that are valid until December 31, 2001, the exemption and any restrictions are identified on the face of the card.

Hawaii had been the only state in the U.S. that continued to deny foreign missions tax exemption. OFM stepped up its efforts in 1996 to support a legislative fix to improve the situation. In 1999, Deputy Assistant Secretary Theodore Strickler addressed the consular corps in Honolulu pledging OFM's continued support to reach a workable solution.

Strickler named Sam Finn, who is already Director of the Honolulu Passport Office, to act as OFM's on-site advocate for the tax-exemption initiative and representative for the local consular community. OFM's Managing Director for Operations, Richard Jaworski and Gilda Brancato from the Legal Adviser's Office maintained communications with the governor's office, members of the state house and senate, and the resident consular corps in Hawaii to ensure the measure's success.

Governor Cayetano holds signed House Bill 1691 with Consul General Minerva Jean Falcon, Dean of Consular Corps in Hawaii.

OFM Logo: An Updated Image

OFM has unveiled a new logo symbolizing its role in the foreign affairs community. The design is in harmony with the goals and ideals of OFM to be moving forward in creating policies that are best for all involved parties, and to encourage and uphold the policy of reciprocity. The design also reinforces the sense of balance and structure that is characteristic of good government. The OFM logo appears in the lower right corner of this page.

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OFM
OFFICE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFM Procedure

A Moving Experience: On Arrivals and Departures

Moving, along with death of a family member and divorce, rates among life's three most stressful experiences. A move involving a residence change to another country can be especially stressful. To help ease the transition, *Consultations* provides a helpful guide for diplomatic and consular personnel in the United States.

Moving

There are many sources of helpful information for individuals moving to the United States. Most large cities have tourist boards that can be contacted for information about relocating. A variety of web sites have information about locations in the United States. Examples include www.sidewalk.com and www.move.com. Sidewalk.com offers detailed information on many cities including each of the cities in which OFM has regional offices. Move.com gives information on making a move to every state in the U.S. and the District of Columbia.

Notification, Accreditation, and Termination of Status

Arrival: Depending on mission status, individuals will need to complete the U.S. Department of State Form DS-2003, DS-2004, or DS-2005. Note that as of June 5, 2000, the DS-2000 series forms must be used.

The new form numbers and titles replace the old as shown in the table below.

An announcement was recently sent to embassies about the new forms; they may be obtained from: Office of Protocol, U.S. Department of State, Production Unit, State Annex 33, 3507 International Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008-3507. Completed forms should also be returned to the address above. For consulates and honorary consuls, the forms must be submitted through their respective embassies. United Nations missions must report to UN Protocol. A personal identification number is issued once the notification of appointment process has been completed.

Departure: A departing employee of a foreign embassy, consulate or international organization must notify the Department of State, Office of Protocol by submitting form DS-2008. The Office of Protocol must also be notified in the case of termination of mission domestic staff.

The Department of State identification card, tax card, and license plates must be returned to the Office of Protocol or to OFM. All three items should be returned immediately upon termination. Many missions return the identification card and tax card attached to the notice of termination. Licence plates must be traded for the title as described in the paragraph on selling/exporting owned vehicles or returning a leased vehicle.

Acquiring and Disposing of Motor Vehicles

Arrival: The importation, lease, and purchase of automobiles may be limited on the basis of reciprocity. Check with the administrative officer in the embassy or with the Vehicle Registration Office in OFM at (202) 895-3521 to be certain of any limitations regarding automobiles. To expedite the importation of automobiles, foreign missions should initiate the importation requests and registration process simultaneously.

Registration: Follow the procedure below to register personal vehicles:

1. Complete form DSP-101 (Application for Registration Personal Vehicle)
2. Attach the certificate of origin, and title for each vehicle, and copy of contract for leased vehicles
3. Attach an insurance binder valid for at least 30 days, and a certificate of insurance, or a declaration page to the completed appli-

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Old Form Number	New Form Number	Title of Form
DSP-110	DS-2003	Notification of Appointment of Foreign Diplomatic Officer and Career Consular Officer
DSP-111	DS-2004	Notification of Appointment of Foreign Government Employee
DSP-112	DS-2005	Notification of Appointment of Honorary Consular Officer
DSP-113	DS-2006	Notification of Change Identification Card Request
DSP-114	DS-2007	Notification of Dependents of Diplomatic, Consular and Foreign Government Employees (continuation sheet)
DSP-115	DS-2008	Notice of Termination of Diplomatic, Consular, or Foreign Government Employment

Q&A

Frequently Asked Questions

In this issue of *Consultations* we are honored to have Doria Rosen, Director of the Department of State Diplomatic Liaison Visa Office, respond to some questions.

Q. When addressing visa applications (also referred to as cases) to the Department of State Diplomatic Liaison Visa Office, what is the best way to make sure material gets there?

A: Diplomatic and international organizations should submit all applications directly to the Diplomatic Reception Desk located at Columbia Plaza. If an organization needs to submit the application by mail or courier service, it should clearly write on the envelope in large red letters the word "DIPLOMATIC." This will avoid delays in delivery and reduce processing time.
An offsite fee collection and data entry service has been established for our business revalidation cases. Please do **not** send "A" and "G" and "NATO" visa applications to the offsite; it will only result in needless delays.

Q. How does one contact the Department of State Diplomatic Reception Desk?

A: Official messengers may drop off and pick up visa applications at the Diplomatic Reception Desk, which is open Monday to Friday from 11:00-12:00. It is in State Annex-1, located at 526 23rd Street NW, Washington, DC 20522-0106. The telephone number for the desk is (202) 663-3081.

Q. For individuals outside the Washington, DC area, what is the best way to contact the Diplomatic Liaison Division of the Visa Office?

A: Individuals should always go through their official missions. If those offices need to reach the Diplomatic Liaison Division of the Visa Office, we can be reached between 2:00 - 4:00 at telephone number 202 663-1743. The Fax number is 202 663-1608. For general information the Internet site is http://travel.state.gov/visa_services.html; the automated fax number is 202-647-3000; and the general information telephone number is 202 663-1225.

Q. What do the letter specifications for visas refer to?

A: There are more than 50 different visa symbols used in issuing U.S. visas. The appropriate category, and its identifying symbol, is determined by the purpose of the travel. For example, a student would be issued an "F" visa based on section 101(a)(15)(F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Diplomatic Liaison Division of the Department of State Visa Office issues visas for employees of international organizations, diplomatic services, and NATO, as well as several other categories. USUN issues non-immigrant visas for personnel that fall under USUN's jurisdiction.

Please send your questions to consultation@state.gov, or write *Consultations*, Office of Foreign Missions, DS/OFM Room 2238, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20520

Faces of OFM

AMY FLOHR

Amy Flohr began working at OFM as the parking enforcement officer in July 1997. In this role she met with the members of the diplomatic community about outstanding parking fines and assisted in their resolution. In seeking resolution to such cases, Ms. Flohr has helped schedule meetings with the Bureau of Traffic Adjudication to allow mission members to contest parking violations. At times she accompanied mission members to the Bureau. She also aided the diplomatic community with parking issues at Reagan National and Dulles International Airports.

In April 1998 she assumed the role of Reciprocity Officer at OFM. Her primary role in this position is to assist in achieving equitable treatment for Department of State personnel abroad in motor vehicles issues. Many times other issues emerge. When this occurs, Ms. Flohr does her best to find the appropriate contacts both within and outside the Department of State.

Ms. Flohr enjoys the work that she does and likes the fact that she is able to use her political science degree. And she says that one of the benefits of her job is the daily communication she has with members of the diplomatic community.

In addition she is pleased to be involved with a program that has saved the U.S. government and diplomatic personnel resources, while providing relief from onerous restrictions.

Her time at OFM has been rewarding, primarily because her work positively affects the lives of others. During her tenure at OFM, Ms. Flohr has volunteered in a Model United Nations (MUN) program, where she taught students at a public high school in Washington, DC, about the international system and conflict resolution. ●

REGIONAL DIRECTORS CORNER

Need to make a telephone call or submit a document to an OFM regional office? Addresses and operating hours for all regional offices are listed below:

Chicago Regional Office
77 W. Jackson Blvd., Suite 2122
Chicago, IL 60604-1503
7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday

Los Angeles Regional Office
10920 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1820
Los Angeles, CA 90024
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

New York Regional Office
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 265
New York, NY 10017-1811
Walk-in hours:
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

San Francisco Regional Office
201 Mission Street, Suite 2220
San Francisco, CA 94105
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

Hawaii Regional Office
1132 Bishop Street, Suite 500
Honolulu, HI 96813-2809
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

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cation to show that valid insurance at or above Department of State requirements has been acquired. The minimum acceptable limits of automobile insurance coverage are shown in the box below.

$300,000 combined single limit

Or split limits of
$100,000 for bodily injury per person
$300,000 bodily injury per accident
$100,000 property damage

Motorcycles are $100,000/$300,000/$50,000

Submit this form, with all required attachments, to OFM's office in Washington, DC, or to the appropriate regional office. UN missions should submit this documentation to the OFM New York Regional Office.

Departure:

Selling, exporting, or returning a leased vehicle: If a member of a diplomatic/consular mission chooses to, and is permitted to sell or export a vehicle, or return a leased vehicle in the United States prior to leaving the country, he or she must complete Form DSP-102 (Application for Title) to obtain the title. In New York or Washington, DC, the title will be surrendered in exchange for Department of State license plates at the OFM offices. Outside these areas the title will be released to a representative of the mission in Washington, DC, New York, or to an OFM Regional Office, which will then forward the document to the vehicle owner. When the vehicle owner receives the title he or she must immediately return the license plates for that vehicle. [**Note:** All vehicles being exported must have a vehicle title.]

Driver's Licenses

Arrival: Until accreditation is obtained, an individual can be issued a temporary driving permit. After an individual has been accredited, a permanent driver's license can be obtained by completing Form DS-1972 (U.S. Department of State Driver's License Application). (See *Consultations* December 1999 issue for more detailed information on driver's licenses.)

Departure: A Department of State driver's license may be retained at the end of one's tour in the U.S. and does not have to be returned.

Tax-Exemption – Sales, Gas, and Utility Taxes

Arrival:

Sales Tax: The Office of Foreign Missions issues sales tax-exemption cards to eligible foreign missions and their members. Form DS-1972 (Tax-Exemption Card Application) is submitted for tax-exemption cards as well as driver's licenses. An application will be processed by OFM in 3 - 10 working days in Washington, DC, or New York areas. Outside these areas processing takes up to 11 days.

Gasoline Taxes: To receive gasoline tax exemption, eligible individuals must obtain a gasoline credit card or

continues on page 4

Tabulations

The Diplomatic Liaison Division of the U.S. Department of State Visa office issues approximately 50,000 visas each year.

U.S. Consulates abroad in 1999 issued a total of 6,195,581 visas of all categories.

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cards. One Form DSP-99A (Application for Diplomatic Exemption from Taxes on Gasoline) must be completed for each credit card, and submitted to the Office of Foreign Missions in Washington, DC, or to the appropriate regional office.

Utility Taxes: Persons eligible for utility tax exemption (electricity, natural gas, cellular phones, and telephone) must complete one DSP-99 form (Application for Diplomatic Exemption from Taxes on Utilities) for each utility. This is bureaucracy at its best, but experience has shown that it is the best procedure to avoid mix-ups and delays in obtaining utility exemptions. This form must be submitted to the Office of Foreign Missions in Washington, DC, or to the appropriate regional office.

Departure:
Tax exemption cards MUST be returned to an OFM office prior to departing an official diplomatic post in the United States.

Housing – Government or Personal Leases

OFM must be notified prior to the lease or purchase of residential properties by foreign missions. Notification should be by diplomatic note to the Office of Foreign Missions, Room 2238, Department of State, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20520. Diplomatic notes may also be faxed in advance to the Property Section at (202) 647-1919. Requests to lease or buy consular residences can be sent either by note through the Embassy or by letter to the appropriate OFM regional office.

Customs Duty-Free Entry of Household Goods

Requests for duty-free customs clearance of household goods are made by submitting Form DS-1504 (Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise). There is no other legal means of clearing household goods into the United States for foreign missions and their personnel. All embassy and international organizations requests for clearance of shipments must be made to the Office of Foreign Missions in Washington, DC. Consulates located in the Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, or New York regions may submit requests to those offices. If an individual has not received a personal identification number prior to arrival of household effects/personal items, he or she can forward a copy of the passport identification page (page showing the U.S. visa) and either a copy of the fully-completed and signed Form DS-2003 or Form DS-2004 to the appropriate OFM office.

Schools

The process of moving is stressful, but moving abroad with young family members can create special problems. Meeting the needs of school-age children in a new country is a tremendous challenge. The U.S. Department of Education's web site **www.ed.gov**; is a great help in easing this transition; information is also available by phone during business hours at (202) 401-2000. The Web site gives useful general information on the U.S. education system.

The **International Baccalaureate** (IB) program is available throughout the United States and similar programs for younger children. Currently over 300 schools in the U.S. offer IB programs. The web site **www.ibo.org** has a full list of schools that offer the program. (Once at the web site, click on "communications," then "school directory," for a list.) The telephone number of the International Baccalaureate office in New York is (212) 696-4464.

Medical Services

Two telephone services can help in immediately locating a doctor or dentist who speaks languages other than English. Both 1-800-DOCTORS (1-800-362-8677) and 1-800-DENTIST (1-800-336-8478) can refer you to medical professionals who speak a variety of languages.

Note: Many services and institutions are similar to those listed in this article. The Department of State does not endorse any of the web sites or organizations listed above. They are listed only because readers may find their services useful.

A special note of thanks to Kris Thompson, our departing editor, who recently left for a new career.

PHONEBOOK

Key Personnel

Managing Director for Operations
Richard Jaworski
(202) 895-3500

Director of Property and Travel
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(202) 647-4554

Director of Diplomatic Motor Vehicles
Jacqueline Robinson
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Director of Duty-free Customs Entry and Tax Exemption
Robert Hyams
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Legal Counsel
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Chicago Regional Office Director
Denise Duclon
(312) 353-5762

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(808) 522-8125

Los Angeles Regional Office Director
Evan Press
(310) 235-6292

New York Regional Office Director
Jim Bond
(212) 826-4500

San Francisco Regional Office Director
Leroy Dal Porto
(415) 744 - 2910

Protocol: Diplomatic and Consular Liaison
Lawrence Dunham
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consultations

Produced by the Office of Foreign Missions
Four issues each year

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