

ARREST OF AMERICAN CITIZEN ABROAD

While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the same protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Persons violating the law in a foreign country, even unknowingly, may be expelled, fined, arrested, or imprisoned. If arrested abroad, a citizen must go through the foreign legal process for being charged or indicted, prosecuted, and possibly convicted and sentenced.

More than 2,500 Americans are arrested abroad annually. More than 30% of these arrests are drug-related, and more than 70% of these drug-related arrests involve marijuana or cocaine.

Each country is sovereign and its laws apply to everyone who enters regardless of nationality. The U.S. Government cannot get Americans released from foreign jails. However, a U.S. Consul will insist on prompt access to an arrested American, provide a list of attorneys (http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/uk/uk_solicitors_august_2006.pdf), provide information on the host country's legal system, offer to contact the arrested American's family or friends, visit on a regular basis, protest mistreatment, monitor jail conditions, provide dietary supplements if needed, and keep the Department of State informed.

The Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) at the Department of State in Washington, D.C., is the point of contact for family members in the United States who are concerned about an American citizen family member who has been arrested abroad. You can reach OCS by calling 1-888-407-4747. Family members in England or Wales concerned about an American arrested in those areas can contact the U.S. Embassy in London at 020-7499-9000.