

IMPORTANT FACTS

Passport & Visa

Your orders states that you will need to obtain a black "Diplomatic" passport from the State Department in Washington D.C. Your local PSD can assist you in this process. While your passport is in Washington D.C., a diplomatic Thai visa should also be obtained. It is not uncommon to have to wait eight weeks or longer for a diplomatic passport and visas to be processed. Therefore, we recommend that you obtain your passports, visas, immunizations, etc. as quickly as possible to help avoid any delay. Do not let anyone tell you that you only need an "Official" Passport. You absolutely must have a diplomatic passport and a diplomatic visa. Have your orders amended if necessary. Contact the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) Overseas Operations for further guidance.

If family members are non-US citizens they will not be able to obtain a Diplomatic Passport/Visa. Their passport must be stamped with a non-immigrant Thai visa "O"-type. Pay attention to expiration dates on passports, 6-months minimum are necessary. Before you depart the U.S., try to ensure that you have all the required Visas and country clearances.

You will need six (6) each of 2"x 2" and 1"x 1" photographs and negatives, white background (note: Men must wear a coat and tie, Women must wear clothing which covers the shoulders). These will be used for a variety of ID cards and records required here. You can take the pictures there in the States or you can take them here at AFRIMS.

In order for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to approve "permits to stay," please ensure that current passports are valid for at least **one full year** at the time of submission.

All "permits to stay" will expire when passports expire. To avoid having lengthy periods waiting for passports and visas to be renewed, HR encourages newly arriving staff to obtain passports that are valid for the duration of assignments in Thailand.

Individuals who do not apply far enough in advance risk going out of status, i.e an overstay. The MFA recently advised all diplomatic missions in Thailand that individuals who overstay, whether holding diplomatic/official/domestic/tourist passports, will be fined 500 baht per day at the Thai Immigration Bureau.

Once you arrive at AFRIMS, you'll turn in your passports to the HR Section to receive permanent diplomatic visas from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, you will receive a green diplomatic immunity card from the Ministry that you and your spouse should carry at all times. The Admin section will also arrange for you to receive a Thai driver's license that needs to be renewed every year.

Shipment of Goods

AFRIMS personnel are authorized to import automobiles within a 6-month window duty free. Additionally, diplomatic purchase of vehicles can also occur during that time frame. You are not authorized to store you POV, because you can ship it here to Thailand. Transportation to and from the office here is by POV or local transportation. You will have the use of an AFRIMS vehicle/driver as

needed during your in-processing at no charge. This will help you with all of the errands that are an inevitable part of settling into a new place. Taxi service is plentiful and inexpensive. Some of our personnel have bought cars locally and hired local drivers in order for them to move about more freely and to avoid driving in the heavy traffic of Bangkok. Converting dollars to baht can be done virtually anywhere in Bangkok and using a visa card for cash is also easy to do just have a passport for identification on hand. There are several immediate expenses you may wish to incur, e.g. joining the Embassy Co-op commissary, American Club, and other miscellaneous things. Maintain or establish your checking and savings account in the U.S. as there are no U.S. Credit Unions or U.S. banks providing the services we are accustomed to.

The current baht (local currency) exchange rate is roughly 32 to \$1.00/US.

Uniforms

Military uniforms are only worn here occasionally. You should bring all summer uniforms (ASU/Class-B), Class-A, dress whites, dress blues uniforms for special ceremonies and occasional TDY's that may require wearing of uniforms. The normal working attire is civilian professional yet casual. There are a few formal social events associated with the U.S. Embassy and appropriate formal/evening wear is required. Keep in mind; it is quite easy and relatively inexpensive to have clothing made here. You will receive a civilian clothing allowance after arrival but be aware this can take months.

Housing

Housing is a key element of quality of life in any military assignment. It is my intent that every individual assigned to AFRIMS has a housing arrangement that provides the military member and their family a safe, clean living environment that provides adequate living space and is conveniently located within Bangkok.

Every newly assigned service member will report to the Chief of Human Resources for an OHA brief. It is imperative that you will have the opportunity to get brief the OHA program and some important do's and don'ts early in the process of finding living arrangements. The list of realtor will be provided.

Most accommodations in Bangkok are furnished service apartments or condos . As you make your search, keep in mind that the proposed unit must also pass certain security and safety standard by GSO housing before move in.

Schools

Bangkok Patana School

2/38 Soi Lasalle, Sukhumvit Soi 105,

Bangkok 10260

Tel: (662) 398-0200

Fax: (662) 399-3179

Website:<http://www.patana.ac.th>

Based on the UK National Curriculum, elementary, middle and high school

International School of Bangkok

39/7 Soi Nichada Thani,
Samakee Road, Pakkret,
Nonthaburi 11120.

Tel: (662) 583-5420

Fax: (662) 583-5431

Website:<http://www.isb.ac.th>

Based on US Curriculum, Grades 1 - 12 (elementary – high school).

New International School of Thailand

36 Sukhumvit Soi 15,
Bangkok 10110

Tel: (662) 651-2065

Fax: (662) 251-6399

Website:<http://www.nist.ac.th>

International curriculum (IB, ICGSE), Year 1 - Year 13 (elementary - high school).

Pets

Bangkok is a large, crowded metropolitan area with little green space. Most of the personnel assigned to Embassy Bangkok live in high-rise apartment buildings. All personnel are housed in high-density residential areas, often sharing limited green space with other families.

Pets, especially dogs, are extremely difficult to maintain in Bangkok. Spaces for dog walking are often distant from apartment buildings. Dogs and cats are banned from public parks, which constitute the majority of available green space. Domestic servants have little experience with pets, often failing to prevent pets from fouling play areas and sidewalks. Most of the landlords rents housing do not allow pets on their premises. Pets and children must share the limited open space, increasing the probability of dog bites along with other health problems.

Bringing any pets? Secure a Vet clearance 7-14 days prior to departure. US carriers will not ship animals to destinations with sustained temperatures over 85 degrees. Importation of pets into Bangkok is generally pretty easy. For transit through places like Tokyo, Seoul, or Manila, contact the embassy or the consulate of these countries and ask what documents are required for transit of animals. Specify the duration of your transit stop. The airlines are of little help on these requirements and in many instances, they confess ignorance or inadvertently misinform. Information from the embassy in the U.S. of the country to be transited is authoritative, and the airlines accept it provided you offer a name and phone number from that embassy. Inform your sponsor of your intention to bring in a pet and let him/her know the breed, sex, age, weight and color. An import license must be obtained here to allow you to bring a pet.

Try not to travel through Bali, Papua (Irian Jaya) or Australia--these places are rabies-free and the authorities routinely destroy animals that are misplaced or are without proper paperwork. Some of the nicest service apartments units don't allow pets.

Immunizations

Please bring immunization record with you. Your records will be reviewed by the Embassy Medical staff and deficient immunizations will be recommended and given upon arrival. You will also have the option to get any immunizations that you lack here at AFRIMS. Bring Dental records also.

Medical Care

We receive our medical care from a medical unit located on the Embassy compound, staffed with one physician, a nurse practitioner and a registered nurse. There is a duty medical person available 24 hours a day. Patients with serious illnesses or injuries are transferred Bumrungrad Hospital the most progress western-style hospital in Bangkok and then or if condition warrants Tripler AMC using the International SOS (ISOS). There are a number of local hospitals providing varying degrees of inpatient and outpatient care; however, most do meet US standards. You (and your family) must enroll in TRICARE Prime Remote upon arrival in Bangkok. The dental coverage is also arranged for through the TRICARE office and requires a monthly premium for family members, same as CONUS.

Contact for Enrollment:

TRICARE Nurse at JUSMAG (also does the dental care coordination)

nursepranee@san.osd.mil

phone: 02-287-1036 X511

cell phone: 01-633-3793

Link to Bumrungrad Hospital

<http://www.bumrungrad.com>

If you have a chronic medical condition, Bangkok may not be the place for you. Please discuss this with your doctor and the overseas screener prior to any more planning. We recommend you bring 2 good household first aid kits: one for the house and another for your car (if you bought one.)

Jet lag is very real coming here. Please keep in close contact with your sponsor so we can set up any hotel arrangements for you.

We have probably not answered all the questions you may have, so please do not hesitate to call, fax or email us and we will try our best to provide you with the proper answers or give you the appropriate assistance. Please visit the Human Resources support page on our AFRIMS website. You can contact us by email at AFRIMS-HR@afirms.org. We look forward to your arrival and to make this move as exciting and painless as possible.

SSG Posey, CHIEF, HUMAN RESOURCES

Updated: 1 July 2015