

Department of State

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the legal representative of the procedures required by local law and the financial institution to withdraw such deposits, and should provide a list of local attorneys in the event counsel is necessary to assist in withdrawing the funds.

(c) A consular officer must not under any circumstances withdraw funds left by a deceased United States citizen or non-citizen national in a bank or financial institution in a foreign country without express approval and specific instructions from the Department.

§ 72.13 Effects to be taken into physical possession.

(a) A consular officer normally should take physical possession of articles such as the following:

(1) Convertibles assets, such as currency, unused transportation tickets, negotiable evidence of debts due and payable in the consular district, and any other instruments that are negotiable by the consular officer;

(2) Luggage;

(3) Wearing apparel;

(4) Jewelry, heirlooms, and articles generally by sentimental value (such as family photographs);

(5) Non-negotiable instruments, which include any document or instrument not negotiable by the consular officer because it requires either the signatures of the decedent or action by, or endorsement of, the decedent's legal representative. Nonnegotiable instruments include, but are not limited to, transportation tickets not redeemable by the consular officer, traveler's checks, promissory notes, stocks, bonds or similar instruments, bank books, and books showing deposits in building and loan associations, and

(6) Personal documents and papers.

(b) All articles taken into physical possession by a consular officer should be kept in a locked storage area on post premises. If access to storage facilities on the post premises cannot be adequately restricted, the consular officer may explore the possibility of renting a safe deposit box if there are funds available in the estate or from other sources (such as the next of kin).

§ 72.14 Nominal possession; property not normally taken into physical possession.

(a) When a consular officer take articles of a decedent's personal property from a foreign official or other persons for the explicit purpose of immediate release to the legal representative such action is not a taking of physical possession by the officer. Before releasing the property, the consular officer must require the legal representative to provide a release on the form prescribed by the Department discharging the consular officer of any responsibility for the articles transferred.

(b) A consular officer is not normally expected to take physical possession of items of personal property such as:

(1) Items of personal property found in residences and places of storage such as furniture, household effects and furnishings, works of art, and book and wine collections, unless such items are of such nature and quantity that they can readily be taken into physical possession with the rest of the personal effects;

(2) Motor vehicles, airplanes or watercraft;

(3) Toiletries, such as toothpaste or razors;

(4) Perishable items.

(c) The consular officer should in his or her discretion take appropriate steps permitted under the laws of the country where the personal property is located to safeguard property in the personal estate that is not taken into the officer's physical possession including such actions as:

(1) Placing the consular officer's seal on the premises or on the property (whichever is appropriate);

(2) Placing such property in safe storage such as a bonded warehouse, if the personal estate contains sufficient funds to cover the costs of such safekeeping; and/or

(3) If property that normally would be sealed by the consular officer is not immediately accessible, requesting local authorities to seal the premises or the property or otherwise ensure that the property remains intact until consular seals can be placed thereon, the property can be placed in safe storage, or the legal representative can assume responsibility for the property.

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(d) the consular officer may decide in his or her discretion to discard toiletries and perishable items.

§ 72.15 Action when possession is impractical.

(a) A consular officer should not take physical possession of the personal estate of a deceased United States citizen or non-citizen national in his or her consular district when the consular officer determines in his or her discretion that it would be impractical to do so.

(b) In such cases, the consular officer must take action that he or she determines in his or her discretion would be appropriate to protect the personal estate such as:

(1) Requesting the persons, officials or organizations having custody of the personal estate to ship the property to the consular officer, if the personal estate contains sufficient funds to cover the costs of such shipment; or

(2) Requesting local authorities to safeguard the property until a legal representative can take physical possession.

§ 72.16 Procedure for inventorying and appraising effects.

(a) After taking physical possession of the personal estate of a deceased United States citizen or non-citizen national, the consular officer should promptly inventory the personal effects.

(b) If the personal estate taken into physical possession includes apparently valuable items, the consular officer may, in his or her discretion, seek a professional appraisal for such items, but only to the extent that there are funds available in the estate or from other sources (such as the next of kin) to cover the cost of appraisal.

(c) The consular officer must also prepare a list of articles not taken into physical possession, with an indication of any measures taken by the consular office to safeguard such items for submission with the inventory of effects.

§ 72.17 Final statement of account.

The consular officer may have to account directly to the parties in interest and to the courts of law in estate matters. Consequently, the officer must

keep an account of receipts and expenditures for the personal estate of the deceased, and must prepare a final statement of account when turning over the estate to the legal representative, a claimant, or the Department.

§ 72.18 Payment of debts owed by decedent.

The consular officer may pay debts of the decedent which the consular officer believes in his or her discretion are legitimately owed in the country in which the death occurred, or in the country in which the decedent was residing at the time of death, including expenses incident to the disposition of the remains and the personal effects, out of the convertible assets of the personal estate taken into possession by the consular officer.

§ 72.19 Consular officer is ordinarily not to act as administrator of estate.

(a) A consular officer is not authorized to accept appointment from any foreign state or from a court in the United States and/or to act as administrator or to assist (except as provided in §§ 72.8 to 72.30) in administration of the personal estate of a United States citizen or non-citizen national who has died, or was residing at the time of death, in his or her consular district, unless the Department has expressly authorized the appointment. The Department will authorize such an appointment only in exceptional circumstances and will require the consular officer to execute bond consistent with 22 U.S.C. 4198 and 4199.

(b) The Department will not authorize a consular officer to serve as an administrator unless:

(1) Exercise of such responsibilities is:

(i) Authorized by treaty provisions or permitted by the laws or authorities of the country where the United States citizen or national died or was domiciled at the time of death; or

(ii) Permitted by established usage in that country; and

(2) The decedent does not have a legal representative in the consular district.