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CONSULAR FUNCTIONS AND MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION OF JAPANESE TRAVELING AND LIVING ABROAD

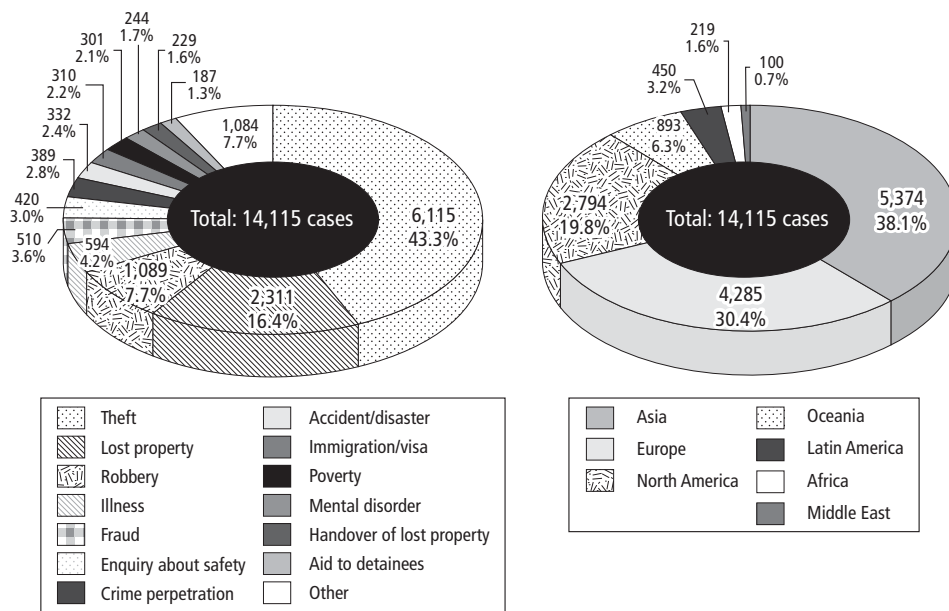
(a) Overview

In today's world, where diverse threats from ordinary crime to large-scale accidents and terrorism exist across national borders, one of the most important tasks of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals abroad. Thus, MOFA is working to enhance further various security measures and its responses to accidents and incidents, including support to victims and their families.

The number of Japanese nationals traveling abroad reached 16.51 million in 2002, while that of Japanese living abroad totaled around 874,000 (as of October 1, 2002). Accordingly, the number of cases in which Japanese nationals were involved in incidents or accidents overseas increased 1.5-fold over the last ten years. In 2002, incidents and accidents involving Japanese nationals included the crash of a China Northern Airlines

passenger plane off the coast of Dalian, China (May, three Japanese killed), the rollover of a bus in the suburbs of Bangkok, Thailand (September, nine Japanese suffered minor or serious injuries), the terrorist attacks in Bali, Indonesia (October, two Japanese killed) and the rollover of a bus in Shangdong, China (October, two Japanese killed, 13 suffered minor or serious injuries). MOFA responded quickly and appropriately in the aftermath of the incidents, including the Bali terrorist attacks, setting up an emergency command center in the ministry headquarters and on the ground so as to communicate with each other 24 hours a day. Worsening political situations in countries including India, Pakistan, the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire required the evacuation of Japanese residents to other countries. Japan responded quickly in the evacuation of Japanese from India and Pakistan by dispatching a Government charter jet to India and taking other measures. In 2001,

Cases Where Help Was Extended to Japanese Nationals Abroad by Overseas Diplomatic Establishments in 2001: Incident/Region



there were 14,115 cases where help was extended to Japanese nationals abroad,³ covering 16,253 people.

At present, 5.29 million foreigners entered Japan, while 1.77 million are residents in Japan. The number of foreigners staying in Japan has increased significantly. While people-to-people exchanges with other countries have been boosted, the task of preventing entry into Japan of terrorists and other foreigners likely to cause problems has become one of the important duties of overseas diplomatic and consular establishments. The wide-area network for visa information (VISA WAN) system was launched in December to scrutinize efficiently the entry of such foreigners into Japan at the visa issuance stage.

In October, the Overseas Emigration Council was incrementally reorganized, and the Council on the Movement of People Across Borders, an advisory body to the minister for foreign affairs, was inaugurated. The council discusses important matters relating to the international exchange of people, with its principal focus being on three themes: (1) examination of measures to bring about people-oriented consular services; (2) promotion of measures for the safety of Japanese nationals abroad and upgrading crisis management ability; (3) responding to issues surrounding foreigners living in Japan and Nikkei (Japanese emigrants and their descendants) (details of reform in consular services can be found in Chapter 4-A).

(b) Promotion of Protective Measures for Japanese Overseas

In support of safe overseas travel and stay by Japanese citizens, MOFA believes in the importance of providing a warm human face in its overseas safety measures. While placing equal priority on preventive measures and providing an apt response in the aftermath of incidents and accidents, MOFA is moving forward with overseas security measures in partnership with other countries, related ministries and agencies, private companies and organizations.

The most critical preventive measure is the dissemination of accurate information and public relations activities to Japanese nationals. MOFA provides a broad range of reference information to Japanese regarding all

countries and regions from the perspective of protecting Japanese overseas and helping them avoid trouble. For example, MOFA not only provides information pertaining to the emergence or possible emergence of threats to the physical safety and lives of Japanese citizens, such as a deterioration in civil order, unrest or terrorism, it offers the basic data necessary for taking appropriate safety measures and for avoiding trouble when traveling or staying abroad. This includes information on the general civil order of a given destination, crime trends (situation, methods, etc.), visas, immigration and emigration procedures, health care and hygiene. In order to provide this kind of information to Japanese nationals in a more easily understood and detailed fashion, the Ministry, in April 2002, revised its entire system of Travel Information including "Travel Advice and Warning" and other services providing information related to overseas safety.

MOFA's Travel Information is now widely available via the Internet at MOFA's Overseas Safety website (<http://www.pubanzen.mofa.go.jp>) (Japanese only), through the Overseas Safety Information Facsimile Service (0570-023330), Overseas Safety Information Terminal Touch Vision and other means. The Overseas Safety website receives over one million hits every month. In addition to this kind of information provision, the Japanese Nationals Protection System using a satellite-operated Global Positioning System (GPS) was established in Afghanistan and surrounding countries. MOFA is also conducting training to handle the outbreak of simultaneous acts of terrorism and other incidents which would require evacuation.

(c) Protecting Japanese Lives and Safety

Strengthened systems of passport issuance and management as well as forgery countermeasures, and rigorous visa issuance policies, are effective means of preventing international crime. In recent years, there have been cases of passports and other travel documents being obtained fraudulently, forged or altered by international criminal organizations or international terrorists and used illegally, which makes enhanced

³ Number of cases of support for Japanese nationals abroad by Japanese embassies, consulates-general or other overseas diplomatic establishments because of matters including incidents or accidents.

systems of passport issuance and management, and stronger countermeasures in regard to travel document forgery an international concern. MOFA has developed the VISA WAN System and is creating a system that will contribute to stringent examination of visa applications. In recognition that building effective cooperation systems with other countries is essential, MOFA held the Third Workshop on Passport Policy in November 2002, which had the attendance of passport-issuing authorities from five countries. Through such measures, MOFA is striving to strengthen passport-issuing and

management systems, to improve forgery-prevention technology and develop information networks.

The number of foreigners entering Japan and the number of foreigners registering as foreign residents in Japan have both been gradually increasing. Meanwhile, the number of illegal foreign residents in Japan has been in gradual decline since the figure peaked in 1993. Crimes committed by some of these illegal residents not only portray to the Japanese public an erroneous image of foreigners living in Japan, they may also obstruct sound international exchange. MOFA is working to prevent

Column

Working as a Consul in Mexico

In the year and a half after I took up my position as Japanese consul in Mexico, I had to deal with a host of problems, including seven incidents in which Japanese nationals died, an incident in which a Japanese national was issued an arrest warrant on suspicion of murder and an incident in which a Japanese national was incarcerated temporarily for cases such as illegal possession of a weapon or assault. In addition, there were accidents such as a plane crash in a local area, major traffic accidents including a bus falling off, and a large fire. Each of these accidents caused many deaths and injuries, and I put all my energy into trying to confirm whether there were any Japanese nationals among the casualties.

There were a lot of questions and enquiries to the consulate concerning first of all the location of Japanese restaurants, as well as the transporting of pets and the movement of sick people back to Japan. Some people called for the sending of the Government Aircraft from Japan to replace cancelled regular flights. Some people had all their money stolen and I personally lent them money for their accommodations and food but it was never returned.

For me as consul, the most difficult thing is that I must remain in a state of tension 24 hours a day. This is because I can never know when or where an incident involving Japanese nationals will occur, and if one does occur I have to make prompt and accurate decisions on the spot. As an example, one Japanese national experi-

enced an explosion in his apartment at 2:00 due to a gas leak and was in a critical condition suffering from burns. Upon receiving this news, I started by confirming what had happened. Then I had to keep a number of issues in mind as I dealt with the situation such as whether the victim should remain in the hospital to which the ambulance had taken him or whether the victim should be moved to a hospital specializing in the treatment of burns; how much the medical costs would be and what to do about their payment; and contacting the victim's family in Japan and confirming whether the family members coming to Mexico had passports.

I would like to see all Japanese tourists and Japanese nationals residing in Mexico return home to Japan with good memories of Mexico. If an individual

experiences something terrible such as having his or her property stolen, it ruins happy memories. If an individual remains aware of his or her environment, and takes just a little care with his or her clothing and actions, it is often true that disaster can be avoided. I would like all Japanese nationals in Mexico to remember again that at the end of the day, each and every individual has the primary responsibility of looking after oneself.

(Photo)

Osamu Houkida, Japanese consul in Mexico

foreigners from entering Japan for the purposes of working and residing illegally through a strict examination of visa applications. Regular consultations are also held with countries from which many citizens enter Japan in an attempt to resolve problems at the consular level.

At the same time, to facilitate the transnational mobility of people and to promote the sound exchange of persons in the context of increasing globalization, MOFA has also worked continuously to simplify and expedite visa procedures. In this regard, specific measures such as easing visa procedures for foreign Information and Communications Technology (ICT) engineers have been undertaken, an action that is also consistent with the Government's deregulation policies. On January 1, 2002, visa regulations were also substantially relaxed with the Republic of Korea (ROK) in an effort to promote medium- and long-term visits between the two countries, and a visa exemption for ROK nationals for the duration of the FIFA World Cup jointly hosted by the two countries was integral to the success of the event.

To promote public awareness of these consular service measures, MOFA organized various events in relation to Passport Day (February 20) and ran an overseas safety campaign in June and July, in addition to regular seminars regarding overseas safety and the continued provision of general safety information to travel agencies and Japanese firms expanding their businesses overseas.

(d) Supporting Life Abroad

With the number of Japanese living abroad growing every year, the activities of Japanese consulates in securing the safety of Japanese nationals and facilitating their comfortable overseas activities have become increasingly complex and diverse. As part of the Government's efforts to improve the welfare of Japanese nationals living abroad, MOFA has long been providing support to overseas Japanese schools and Japanese supplementary schools in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. In the area of health, MOFA has since 1972 been dispatching traveling teams of medical doctors with the cooperation of Japanese medical institutions, primarily for health consultations with Japanese nationals living in developing countries, especially those in tropical regions with poor medical conditions. Such teams were dispatched to 38 countries in 2002. MOFA also works to disseminate widely medical information regarding the

spread of infectious diseases and other matters through Travel Information (Spot Information) and other means, based on information from other national governments and the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition to such efforts, MOFA has in recent years been working in consultation with concerned countries to promote measures in new areas, such as eliminating duplicate contributions to pension funds and tackling issues regarding the computation of their total length of payment, as well as simplifying procedures for obtaining driver's licenses abroad. Further, to contribute to the end of the social rehabilitation of Japanese prisoners sentenced abroad, Japan concluded the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons (for Japan, the convention entered into force on June 1, 2003).

In line with the 1998 revision of the Public Offices Election Law, Japanese living abroad are now able to participate in national elections. Duties related to balloting abroad are an important issue in terms of enabling the public to exercise their rights. Following the House of Representatives election of June 2000, balloting by overseas Japanese residents took place again for the House of Councillors election of July 2001, with approximately 22,000 Japanese residing abroad exercising their right to vote. To cast a vote overseas, eligible voters must register in advance. Japanese overseas diplomatic and consular establishments are implementing an information campaign regarding the new system, and consulate staff are traveling around the countries where they are posted to promote registration. As of the end of 2002, approximately 75,000 Japanese residing abroad had registered to vote in future elections.

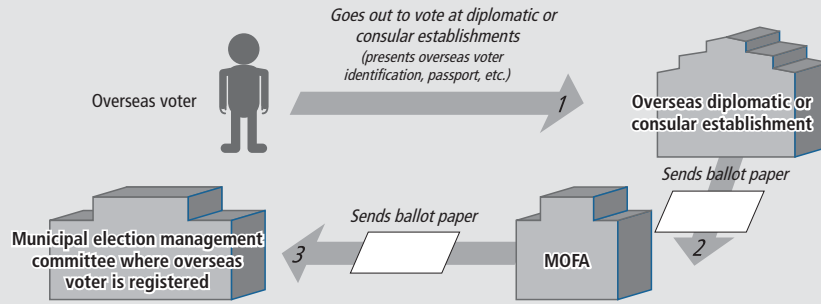
(e) Cooperation with Overseas Nikkei Communities

The history of Japanese emigration stretches back over 130 years, and at present the number of Japanese emigrants and their descendants living abroad, mostly in the Americas, is estimated to be in the order of 2.6 million, including 1.4 million in Brazil and one million in the United States. These Nikkei (Japanese emigrants and their descendants) are acclaimed in their respective countries for their activities in a wide range of fields including politics, administration, business, academia and culture, as well as for their positive contributions to economic and social development. They also play a critical role in promoting mutual understanding and amicable relations between Japan and their countries of residence.

Overseas Voting System

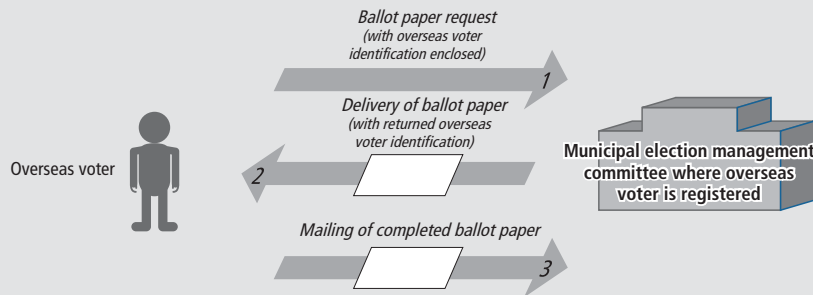
(1) Voting at overseas diplomatic and consular establishments

Those with voting rights who are on the overseas electoral register may cast their vote at overseas diplomatic or consular establishments (embassies, consulates-general) with voting booths upon presentation of their overseas voter identification and passport or other personal ID. The voting period and time are, in principle, from the day the election is officially announced until the day specified by each overseas diplomatic or consular establishment, from the hours 9:30 to 17:00 (the time and ballot period, however, may vary according to establishments).



(2) Voting via mail

If there is no diplomatic or consular establishment in the country or area of residence (or in the jurisdictional area of the overseas diplomatic or consular establishment), if the establishment for the area is not conducting balloting, or if the establishment conducting the balloting is distant from the voter's residence, voting may be completed by a postal ballot (the regions from which voting via mail is permitted are designated in advance).



(3) Voting in Japan

Overseas voters may vote on presentation of their overseas voter identification when they return temporarily to Japan or after they have returned to Japan but are not yet registered voters. These votes will be treated as domestic absentee ballots.

MOFA has extended its assistance in line with the changing needs of overseas Nikkei communities, including welfare issues associated with the aging of immigrants, assistance to those who cannot help themselves, human resources development and the utilization of Nikkei human resources in economic and technical cooperation. Measures that are no longer attuned to the times have also been reviewed, ensuring effective policy implementation. Aid for second and third generation Nikkei, in particular, focuses on the intake of technical trainees with a view to promoting human resources development and on technical cooperation provided through Nikkei people. In the area of Japanese language education, measures include language training

programs and the dispatch of Japanese language teachers to local Japanese language schools. A variety of programs have been implemented to enable Nikkei to act even more strongly as a bridge between Japan and their countries of residence. In addition, the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum opened in the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Yokohama International Centre in December 2002. This museum serves to deepen the understanding of the contribution Japanese emigrants and Nikkei people have made in their countries of settlement with reference to the history of Japanese emigration, as well as to inform the younger generations in Japan about emigrants and their countries in which they settled.