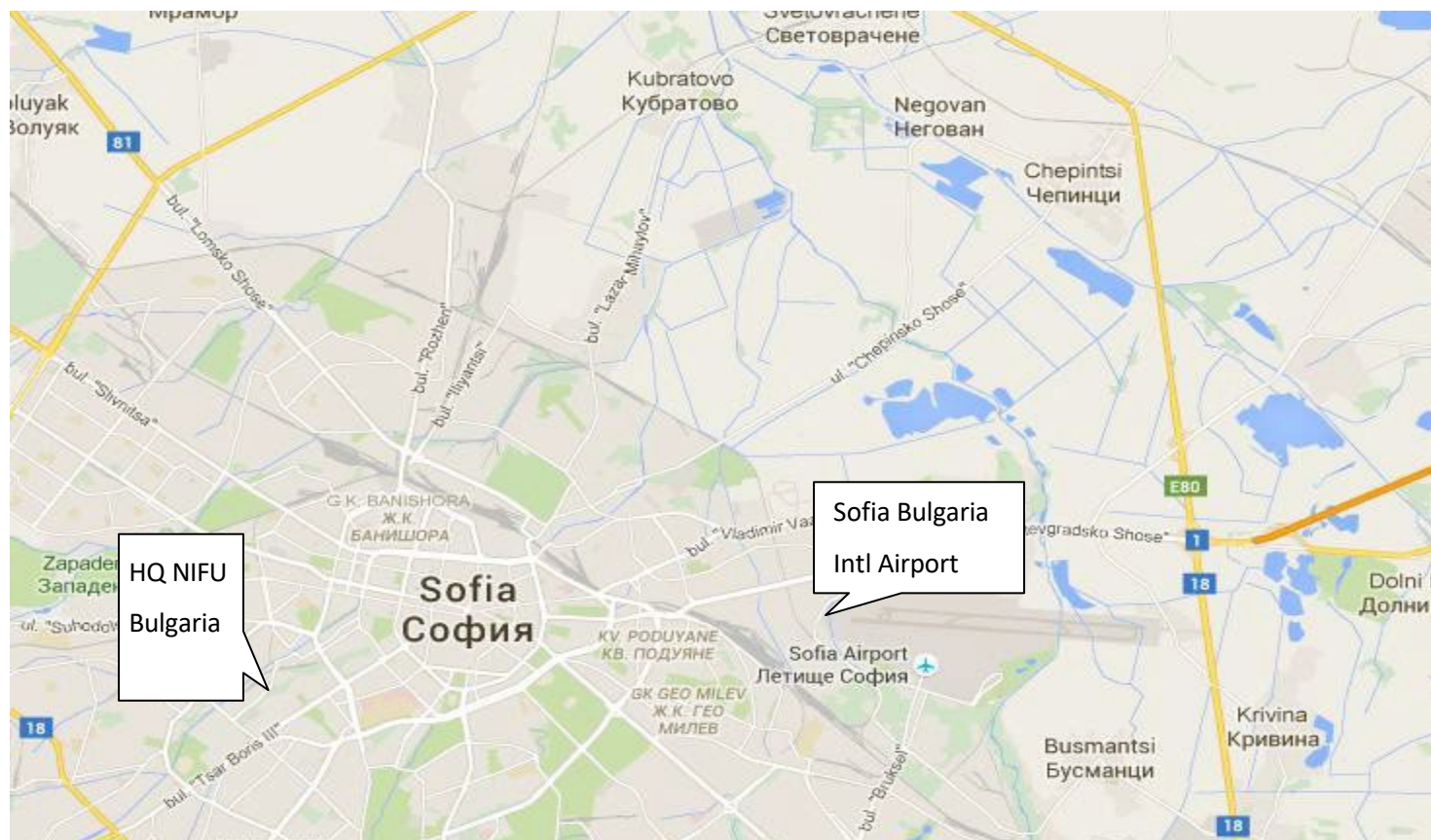


# Sofia, Bulgaria

## NATO Force Integration Unit – Bulgaria

(NFIU-BGR)

(Last updated JAN2025)



## Contact Information

### **HHC AFSOUTH Battalion**

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**HHC 1SG:** 1SG Phillip C. Heavrin

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**Staff Duty:** +39-340-269-1012

# Local Contact Information at Bulgaria

<u>BGR Admin Office:</u>	Int'l Comm 0035-929-224-345
<u>BGR Staff Assitanthn Office:</u>	Int'l Comm 0035-929-224-344
<u>US National Representative:</u>	Int'l Comm 0035-929-224-392

Emergency: 112

## US Senior National Representative:

Int'l Comm 0040 -314- 038- 005      DSN: TBD

## US Staff Admin Office:

Int'l Comm 0040-314- 034-011      DSN: 314-656-9604      COM: 0049-611-143-656-9604

## NSE Office:

DSN: 314-656-9603/9609

COM: 0049-611-143-656-9603

## **Welcome**

Welcome to US Army NATO (USANATO). A smooth transition to USANATO begins with good sponsorship. It is imperative that you initiate and maintain contact with your assigned sponsor immediately. Your sponsor is the one person who can help ensure that you and your family arrive in country and begin in processing smoothly. Be sure to address your concerns and questions before your arrival, so that your sponsor and gaining unit can assist you properly. Prior to your arrival, your sponsor should have made billeting reservations, airport transportation pick-up, and in-processing appointments for you as a minimum. Make sure to inform your sponsor of any last minute flight changes or reporting delays. Below is a highlight of what you can expect at your country of assignment. The information here is not all inclusive and may change over time. It is especially important to check and verify a country's requirement for passport and visa.

## **The Role of NFIU-Bulgaria**

The NFIU is set up in response to new security challenges that NATO faces today. The NFIUs are small headquarters and not military bases.

The key mission of the NFIU is to prepare for, and facilitate if needed, the rapid deployment of the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, which would deploy to the conflict area within 48 hours. The NFIUs will also support collective defense planning and help coordinate training and exercises.

As part of a wider NATO community working in the NFIU Estonia means to work in a joint and multinational environment with all the challenges and advantages it gives to every one of us in NATO. Be assured that your tour at NFIU Estonia will contribute to your professional development.

## **Resources**

### **Garrison Support**

US Army Garrison Bavaria

## Passports/Visa

Family members and US Government civilians traveling overseas are required to have passports. Official or “no-fee passports” can be obtained at Government expense. The application process may take 4 to 6 weeks, so, you should begin the passport application process as soon as you receive your travel orders. Soldiers should also request a No-Fee Passport or apply for a Tourist Passport prior to leaving the United States for this assignment.

A birth certificate with a raised seal is required to apply for a passport. You can request a birth certificate from the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state where you were born. Adoption decrees, marriage and/or divorce decrees may be required for personnel getting a passport with a different name than the name that appears on the birth certificate. The U.S. State Department requires both parents’ consent for new passports for children less than 14 years old. If one parent is unavailable because of geographic separation, divorce, or other circumstances, the parent applying for a child’s passport must obtain a signed statement from the absent parent that grants permission to take the child overseas.

Tourist passports are needed for personal travel in Europe. You may apply for tourist passports on arrival, but for convenience it is recommended that you should apply for the tourist passport while you’re still residing in the United States. You can find more information on tourist passports from your local personnel services detachment, passport office nearest you, or from the U.S. State Department’s official website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

## In-processing

You will arrive at the Sofia International Airport. Your sponsor and personnel from NFIU-BG or a person from the company headquarters will pick you up and take you to Joint Headquarters – NFIU - BG location for in-processing upon arrival.

All personnel serving or working at NFIU-BG must be security cleared to appropriate level according to requirements of his/her position. The clearance has to be done by the sending state. The clearance must be effective before starting service in NFIU-BG and must last until the end of your service tour.

All personnel must bring a copy of their security clearance certificate. All personnel will be briefed on security regulations and procedures upon arrival.

The in-processing to NFIU-BG will be conducted according to NFIU HQ requirements and NFIU-BG will organize assistance as necessary.

Soldiers should arrive with all following deployment requirements up to date:

ACFT within the past six months of arrival on DA Form 705

Weapons qualification within the past six months of arrival. NOTE: Weapons qualifications currently are unavailable locally. Please bring your current weapons card with you for in-processing.

Dental status Category I or II

PHA up to date

Immunizations up to date

## **Training**

HHC Training manager will verify and validate all 350-1 training that is complete and will notify the new personnel of their status. HHC Orderly room will notify personnel, via email, when readiness training (to include but not limited to Weapons Ranges, EO, SHARP, ACFT, etc.) has been scheduled. Additionally, HHC 1SG will notify personnel of their medical readiness and provide guidance on completing. All personnel should complete the following online 350-1 Training prior to arriving:

Anti-Terrorism (AT Level 1)

Code of Conduct (Sere Level 100.2)

Cyber Awareness

Threat Awareness Reporting Program (TARP)

OPSEC

INFOSEC

Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)

Resilience – Azimuth (GAT)

Personnel Readiness (Suicide Awareness and Substance Abuse)

Commanders Safety Course (SFC and above)

Sponsorship

## **Logistics**

Personnel will in-process with HHC Supply during to have OCIE reviewed and issued if necessary. Personnel will need to have their clothing record from previous unit and a copy of their orders during this time. After a review of your clothing record, HHC Supply will order any equipment you will need and issue the equipment upon receiving. Depending on the billet you are assigned to, you may be required to sign a hand receipt for any equipment you will be responsible for. This will be completed by the section you are assigned to.

## **SRO/UCMJ**

All personnel assigned to Naples, Italy are under the jurisdiction of USARAF/SETAF. Services provided to Personnel and their dependents include the following:

Military Justice: GOMORs, Article 15s; enlisted separations, officer eliminations and courts martial.

Administrative Law: Investigations, compliance with and interpretation of Army regulations

Fiscal Law: review purchase requests to ensure purchase is authorized.

International Law: review and interpret agreements, raise issues involving privilege and immunity shortfalls through appropriate legal channels.

Ethics: to include financial disclosure program (OGE 278), compliance with Joint Ethics Regulation and Joint Travel Regulations, legal reviews of fundraising and gifts.

Client services: to include the provision of client services to Soldiers, Civilians, and families throughout the Brigade footprint.

## **IT Support**

Access to the network, computer and other IT support will be provided by the S6 Section for those personnel under Headquarters and Headquarters Company. For personnel assigned to a NATO billet in Bucharest, Romania will have network, computer and other IT support provided by NATO Bulgaria.

## **Closest Military Installation**

Commissary/Exchange

There are no tax free facilities/Commissary/Exchange in Bulgaria. The nearest facilities are at USAG Bavaria. If you require specialty items (hair, face, body, favorite cooking spices, etc.) you will need to bring in bulk when you depart or order online once you arrive. It is very difficult to find specialty items such as these on the economy. There is some American brand named products available in some local shops/malls. Ensure you ask your sponsor about this if you are unsure.

## **Medical/Dental**

All dental care for the Soldier and family members is done on the local economy through TriCare International SOS (ISOS). All Soldiers should have MetLife Insurance for their Family Members for dental care. You are responsible for scheduling all appointments and care through International SOS.

Active duty personnel under full-time orders with a permanent duty assignment, who live and work more than 50 miles (or approximately a one-hour drive) from a military hospital or clinic in TPR-designated ZIP codes, must enroll in TRICARE Prime Remote (TPR). In some cases where geographic boundaries create undue hardship for travel, members living closer than 50 miles may be eligible for TPR.

ADFM's residing with their TPR-enrolled sponsor's qualifying TPR location are eligible for TPRADFM. Once ADFM's enroll in TPRADFM, they may remain in TPRADFM as long as their sponsor is enrolled in TPR and they reside in the same TPR-qualifying location. ADFM's may remain enrolled in TPRADFM even if their sponsor later receives an unaccompanied permanent change of assignment and they continue to reside in the same TPR location. If ADFM's choose not to enroll in TPRADFM, they will receive care under TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra, with applicable cost-shares and deductibles.

If you're an active duty service member or an activated Guard or Reserve member stationed in a designated remote overseas location, you must enroll in TRICARE Prime Remote Overseas. Family members must be command-sponsored to enroll or they have the option to use TRICARE Standard

Overseas if not command-sponsored. Call your regional call center Eurasia-Africa: +44-20-8762-8384

TRICARE Prime Remote Overseas meets or exceeds the requirements for minimum essential coverage. The Affordable Care Act requires you to maintain basic health care coverage—called minimum essential coverage. If you don't have minimum essential coverage, you may have to pay a fee for each month you aren't covered under the Affordable Care Act.

### **Who Can Participate?**

The following beneficiaries may enroll in TRICARE Prime Remote Overseas:

Active duty service members

Command-sponsored active duty family members

Activated National Guard/Reserve members

Command-sponsored family members of activated National Guard/Reserve members

When you enroll in TRICARE Prime Remote Overseas, you can call an overseas point of contact (POC) for help.

Enroll in a TRICARE plan overseas

Schedule appointments at overseas network facilities

File your medical and dental claims

Answer questions about coverage options and benefits—including complex issues

Navigate TRICARE's electronic self-service options

To locate your POC, contact your TRICARE Area Office.

### **What is International SOS?**

International SOS is a medical and security assistance company that TRICARE has partnered with to provide healthcare for remote locations. International SOS provides assistance with scheduling medical appointments, locating network primary and specialty care providers and medically monitoring your care. There is no out-of-pocket costs or paperwork to file. SOS also provides a 24 hour, seven day a week doctor or nurse advice line. The number is 44-20-8762-8133, and you can call this number collect. You can find more information on SOS at the following website:

<http://www.internationalsos.com/private/tricare/europe/>

Phone number:

0800-181-8508 (This number is for a TRICARE representative that works at the International SOS)

Collect: 00-44-20-8768-8133

Fax: 00-44-20-8762-8125

Email: [tricarelon@internationalsos.com](mailto:tricarelon@internationalsos.com)

### **Keep Your DEERS Information Up To Date**

Eligibility for TRICARE is determined by the services and reflected in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). It is important to keep DEERS records up to date. Due to coverage requirements under the Affordable Care Act, TRICARE must be able to verify your coverage status based on what is listed in DEERS. Your Social Security number (SSN) and the SSN of each of your covered family members must be included in DEERS for your TRICARE coverage to be reflected accurately. For more information, visit [www.tricare.mil/deers](http://www.tricare.mil/deers).

Soldiers and family members will be referred to local network physicians by TriCare International SOS. TriCare maintains a list of local network physicians in Lithuania, including specialists, who speak English and meet strict medical standards of practice. Standards of practice in Lithuania are as strict as those in the United States, but rest assured that your medical needs will be satisfactorily met when referred to one of these physicians.

Family members will also need to be enrolled in TriCare Prime Remote Overseas. Contact TriCare for proper procedures to enroll in International SOS. For Soldiers there will be certain medical requirements (PHA, PDHA, etc) that can only be met by going to a Military Treatment Facility (MTF).

## **Schools**

There are no Department of Defense Schools (DoDDS) in Bulgaria. The Anglo-American School of Sofia offers a rigorous curriculum that challenges each student to excel.

Their admissions policy can be accessed at the school's webpage <http://www.aas-sofia.org>.

When forms are submitted electronically, a signature will be required when visiting the school. For your convenience, you may refer to the application process.

Anglo-American School of Sofia <http://www.aas-sofia.org/>

Siyanie Street 1, Pancharevo Sofia 1137, Bulgaria

Phone: +359 2 9238810,11

Fax: +359 2 9238859

The Anglo-American School of Sofia is fully accredited by:

- The Council of International Schools (CIS) and
- The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

They are an authorized International Baccalaureate Organization (IB) World School. The Anglo-American School of Sofia is a member of good standing with The Central Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA), The Council of British International Schools (COBIS) and The European Council of International Schools (ECIS). AAS is the only International school in Sofia associated with the United States Embassy and works with the U. S. Department of State and the Office of Overseas Schools.

The school staff stresses parent involvement, which is paramount to the success of any school. The Anglo-American School of Sofia has a strong and active Parent-School Association (PSA) that fully supports the entire school program. They encourage all of the school Families to be actively engaged in the education of their child/children and they have activities for the non-working parent during the school day.

## **CHILDCARE FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS**

As for the daily schedule and curriculum of a kindergarten, they usually open between 07:00 to 07:30



(varies by kindergarten) and stay open until 18:00-19:00. Basic education in language and speech, math, arts and music, and physical activity is taught through playful activities, and play time (outdoors at least once a day if the weather permits), three regular meals (breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack) and a 1.5-2 hour naptime are provided.

Several kindergartens also have extracurricular voluntary activities available for children, sometimes for a small extra charge.

There are several privately owned kindergartens in and around Sofia:

**ABC KinderCare Centre** has two fully English-speaking nursery schools in Sofia – one in the town situated in lovely houses, beautifully furnished and equipped with state of the art technology for language learning and development. Children from 2–6 years old.

Open: Open 08:30-18:00. Closed Sat, Sun. Address: 1 25 Knyaz Boris Street  
Phone: +359 2 434 1082; +359 889 229666    www: <http://www.abckinder.org>

### **ICCF**

In a large house with garden, midway between Simeonovo and Dragalevtzi villages on the slopes of Vitosha mountain. Fully English-speaking day nursery, which accepts children between the ages of 2 and 5. This is the oldest English-speaking nursery school in Sofia and is a popular choice for expats.

Open: Open 08.30-17.30.  
Closed Sat, Sun.  
Address: 36 Vaklinets Street, Dragalevtzi  
Phone: 02 967 3112  
<http://www.iccf-bg.com>  
[office@iccf-bg.com](mailto:office@iccf-bg.com)

## **Housing**

There is no Government Quarters/Housing available. Families must reside in Private Leased Housing. Many of the local quarters may be a bit smaller than what some Americans are accustomed to, but there are suitable housing available. You will find most housing without bedroom closets, yet the overall living quarters are comfortable and accommodating. Having a positive outlook and considering ways to adapt to a completely different culture will enable you to overcome this culture shock more quickly.

The recommended agencies that are offering apartments for rent in Sofia (apartment rentals) are

- ☐ Cleves
- ☐ Vip Apartments Sofia
- ☐ Sofia lettings
- ☐ Galardo Real Estate
- ☐ Anima-m, Unique Estates

- ☐ EL-EM, Address Real Estate
- ☐ Yavlena Real Estate
- ☐ Mirela LTD.

CLEVES: Address: 16 C Pimen Zografski St., t. 0700 17 008; office@cleves.bg;  
<http://www.cleves.bg/>

VIP APARTMENTS SOFIA : Address: Bulgaria, 1000 Sofia 28 Neofit Rilsky St., t. (+359) 896 865801; (+359) 896 865800;(+359) 893 624082; E-mail: info@vipapartsofia.com  
<http://www.vipapartsofia.com/bg>

Mirela LTD: Address: Blvd Bulgaria 81V; Phone: 02/9812345 or GSM: 088 882 8147  
e-mail: info@mirela.bg; Website: [www.mirela.bg/en](http://www.mirela.bg/en)

These agencies usually deal with foreigners and embassies and this guarantees the high quality service and the apartments for rent in Sofia.

Many of the electrical appliances you currently own cannot be used on the European 220 voltage systems. However, for example, plug adapters and special light bulbs are often all that is needed to convert your 110 volt lamp to 220 volts. You will need to buy 220 volt light bulbs for your lamps.

Other 120v appliances will require a transformer or you can buy 220 volt appliances when you arrive.

## **Mail**

The US Embassy provide mail service for US Soldiers and their Family members. Receiving mail and packages will not be an issue; however, you will use click and ship to mail your packages from the US Embassy.

## **Banking**

There shall be no restrictions on the access of members and their dependents to open and hold back accounts and similar accounts in the Bulgaria. Establish an account with one of the local Bulgarian banks located in Sofia. Foreign Bank Allotments (FBA) are available and specific details are available upon arrival from Charlie Company, AFNORTH BN. Either option will help facilitate you to pay rent, cell phone bills, utilities and other type of service that is needed in at your new duty station.

The Bulgarian monetary unit of currency is the Lev (BGN) (лѐв, abbreviated "лв", plural: Leva), which is equal to one hundred Stotinki. In archaic Bulgarian the word "lev" meant "lion" and as you can see lions are all over Bulgaria in various forms (sculptures, monuments, etc.) representing the braveness of the Bulgarian nation.

Since 1997, the country has been governed by a currency board and the value of the lev has been pegged to the EURO, at a fixed rate of 1 EUR-1.95583 BGN. 1 Bulgarian Lev equals approximately US 0.63, UK 0.40 and EUR 0.5. You can check the current exchange rate on the website of the Bulgarian National Bank ([http://www.bnb.bg/?toLang=\\_EN](http://www.bnb.bg/?toLang=_EN)).

Shopkeepers and other businesses in Bulgaria will usually not accept foreign money, although many will accept the euro. Bulgaria still remains a largely cash economy in the rural areas; but in major cities, credit cards are generally accepted.

Opening a bank account is very simple – you can do so at the nearest bank office; all you need for is an ID card or passport.

In most cities there are many money exchange offices which are marked with signs that say "CHANGE". It is much safer to exchange your money at a bank. Banks apply little or no commissions, and generally offer good rates, although they are slightly worse than at a (non-criminal) change bureau. Higher commissions may be applied to traveler's cheques. Old, dirty or very worn bank notes may be refused. Never exchange money out on the street. Beware of people on the street who offer high rates of exchange or who may ask you to make some change for them. Some of the best places around Sofia where you are going to find the best rate of almost any possible currency are located downtown just by the National Palace of Culture. The one on Vitosha Boulevard works only during the day, but the other one by the corner on Scobelev Boulevard works 24/7.

Over the past years the ATM network in Bulgaria has grown considerably, making it relatively easy to obtain cash from the numerous ATMs in Sofia, as well as in all other major cities and resorts. The national credit/debit card circuit BORICA, to which all ATMs in the country are hooked up to, they accepts VISA/Plus, Visa Electron, MasterCard/Cirrus, Maestro, American Express, Diners Club, and a number of other cards.

**One thing to remember, in order to open a European Bank Account, you will need to have a passport. In most areas local bank accounts are required to pay your rent, cell phone bills, utilities and other type of services.**

## **Driver's License**

Foreigners may drive in Bulgaria with a valid driving license issued by a foreign country for up to one year. A valid driving license issued in a country outside Bulgaria is valid in Bulgaria if the driver is 18 years of age or older.

Foreign driving licenses must be accompanied by a legalized translation in Bulgarian or an international driver's license/permit (IDL/IDP). An IDP is available from the issuing country's road traffic authority or motoring organization such as the AAA. Although Bulgaria accepts as valid the driving permit or license issued by the sending State. While utilizing your stateside license is considered the standard it is highly recommended that you obtain an international driver's license before arriving in Bulgaria for any travel / business you might do outside of the country. An international driver's license can be obtained through AAA while you are still in the states.

Another source to obtain an International Driver's License is through Idlid. Sponsors should notify the inbound Soldier and dependents, those that are of driving age of the need to obtain an International Driver's license prior to departure from CONUS. <http://www.idlid.com/prices.php> Update: IDL Website: <http://www.idlid.com/?gclid=CJGI0tj31MMCFQoKwwod0KoA4g>

International Driver's License (book only): \$20.00 US

International Driver's License (book with regular plastic card): \$25.00 US Additional plastic card: \$10.00 US

International Driver's License (book with magnetic stripe plastic card): \$35.00 US

Additional magnetic stripe plastic card: \$15.00 US

Additional security hologram security seal affixed to booklet: \$10.00 US

Member plastic ID card: \$20.00 US

A foreigner who is a resident in Bulgaria may be required to exchange their driving license for a Bulgarian one if they commit a driving offense and the infringement requires that points must be taken from the license.

Non-EU-issued licenses may be exchanged if the issuing country has ratified the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic and the license meets the requirements of the agreement. Up-to-date information on exchange agreements is available from the license issuing-country's Embassy or Consular office in Bulgaria.

If the license cannot be exchanged for a Bulgarian one, the full driving exam process (practical and theory tests) must be successfully completed and a Bulgarian driving license issued.

Driving licenses are exchanged at the local Traffic Police offices of the Bulgarian Traffic Police (KAT). Take the original driving license and residency permit.

When a foreign driving license is exchanged for a Bulgarian one, its validity is verified and the foreign license is returned to the country of origin with an explanation of the reason for the exchange.

## **Vehicle Registration**

All private vehicles that are brought into Bulgaria for permanent or temporary use are subject to registration. Registration of a vehicle is necessary if the continuous stay exceeds one year.

### **Importing a Foreign Vehicle to Bulgaria**

A private vehicle may be temporarily imported and used on Bulgarian roads for up to six months as long as the vehicle has a minimum third party insurance policy. However, a foreign-registered car can only be used by the owner or someone they give a written permit for limited purposes, for example a mechanic at a garage to carry out a necessary repair.

Foreigners moving to Bulgaria with a new or used foreign registered car should go to the local Road Traffic Office to begin the registration process. Once a foreigner becomes resident in Bulgaria, they should register their vehicle on Bulgarian registration plates.

## Documents Required when Registering a Private Vehicle in Bulgaria

The vehicle must be registered in the same name as the original registration documents. To register a vehicle in Bulgaria you must go to the local Road Tax Office with the following documents.

- Proof of identity
- Original receipt/bill of sale
- Proof of residency or employment contract
- A valid roadworthiness certificate
- Vehicle registration documents
- Receipts proving that Bulgarian vehicle tax has been paid. The amount paid depends on the age and model of the car
- Proof of minimum third party insurance
- Proof of payment of customs duty for non EU/EEA vehicles

**Note:** Vehicles imported from outside the EU/EEA will need to undergo a technical test. Right hand drive (RHD) vehicles must have the headlights adjusted before registration.

At the same time, the owner will be issued with Bulgarian registration plates; these are paid for at the Road Traffic Office. You must present these plates as proof of payment in order to receive the registration documents. Once the vehicle has been registered on Bulgarian plates, the owner may not sell it within the first year.

### Party Compulsory Third Liability Insurance

- All vehicles in Bulgaria must have a third party liability insurance.
- Third-party insurance policies are valid for one year for Bulgarian registered vehicles.
- Foreign registered vehicles, without a valid third party insurance issued in their country.
- of origin can be insured in Bulgaria for a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of six months.

A Green Card can be issued in addition to the third party policy (on request by the owner). Check with your insurance company before departing the United States.

It is compulsory to always carry the following documents in the car:

- A valid driving license.
- The vehicle's registration document.
- Proof of insurance, with the sticker on the windscreen.
- Third party insurance is compulsory for all vehicles.
- A roadworthiness certificate and a stamp on the windscreen.
- A road tax vignette sticker on the windscreen when travelling outside urban areas. You can buy those at the gas stations.

All vehicles must also carry:

- Red warning triangle; reflective green or orange vest; first-aid kit; fire-extinguisher.

## **Vignette (road tax)**

The vignette is the equivalent of road tax in Bulgaria and must be bought and stuck on the windscreen when driving outside of urban areas. Weekly, monthly or annual vignette stickers are available at most gas stations and post offices. The vignette can also be bought at Bulgarian borders when entering the country.

## **Vehicle Tax**

An annual vehicle tax must be paid at the Taxes and Fees Office. The amount paid depends on the age and engine size of the vehicle.

Before the registration of the vehicle and receiving the registration certificate plus registration plate, the owner has to go through pre-registration inspection at the inspection station. Pre-registration inspection is followed by the registration procedure. A vehicle can be registered under the name of only one person. But a person can name other drivers authorized to drive the car. If the vehicle is jointly owned, it will be registered under the name of only one of the owners.

After registering the vehicle and receiving the Bulgarian registration plates, it is obligatory to have Bulgarian 3rd party liability insurance. The amount and duration of car insurance is a matter of a particular insurance policy.

Fuel: There are no fuel rations at this time once the SOFA Agreement is signed, you will be provided the information from the NFIU.

## **Transportation**

Soldiers should schedule/track their Household Goods shipment on the My Move.mil website from Military One Source. If you plan to ship personal property at government expense, contact your local Transportation Office, to arrange for shipment, and contact the Transportation Office of your new duty station immediately after arrival to arrange for delivery. Start planning your household goods shipment 6 to 8 week after receipt of orders. 1). Register for a Defense Personal Property System (DPS) password at [www.move.mil](http://www.move.mil). 2). Call your local Transportation Office after you receive your password for instructions and/or appointment.

Upon receipt of your orders, you are required to report to make your flight arrangements with 3 copies of your orders. Soldier must be port called to Sofia International Airport, Sofia, Bulgaria. The nearest US facilities and logistical support services available are in Grafenwoehr/Vilseck Germany. Use of the Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) is authorized in accordance with the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Financial Management and Comptroller) Memorandum dated 9 June 2009, Subject: Use of the Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) for Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Expenses. If Service Member does not have a GTCC, they must apply for a GTCC. Service Member must advise their Agency Program Coordinator (APC) of PCS orders and leave date to use GTCC in PCS status. Service Member should request credit limit increase if required to cover PCS entitlements per DOD guidelines.

Upon arrival at new unit, Service Member will file travel voucher and in-process with gaining unit. Service Member has 30 days from PCS end date to pay off GTCC balance. Reimbursement for travel and transportation expenses will be limited to the most direct GSA city pair fare available between the old and new Permanent Duty Station. If GSA fares are not available, reimbursement will be based on the most cost effective, government procured, transportation available between the old and new permanent change of stations. The GTCC will not be used to purchase discretionary travel (i.e. leave), circuitous routings or travel to/from duty locations not stated on the orders. The soldier must use a government travel office to personally procure travel arrangements. Purchase of travel through a commercial on-line service or commercial travel agent is not authorized. It is imperative that personnel comply with Report Date in assignment instructions.

Reimbursement for travel within CONUS is limited from your departing unit to the cost effective POV port. Due to recent heightened force protection measures, all personnel (to include those on leave) arriving or traveling within the USAREUR AOR via commercial transportation, will wear appropriate civilian attire that does not readily convey affiliation with the Department of Defense (DOD).

Personnel are encouraged to take steps to limit wearing and carrying items that display a distinct DOD or U.S. signature, i.e. military duffel bags, flight bags, and ACU patterned backpacks or carry-on.

Bring your shipping documents with you, do not pack them or mail them. You will need the information from those documents to track your shipment. Mandatory PCS/ETS retained issue consists of 26 items and corresponding components. Soldiers will replace or upgrade mandatory and PCS retained items with their servicing central issue facility (CIF).

## **Dog owner tax**

The tax for possessing a dog is paid by all dog owners at the local Taxes and Fees Office of the municipality where the owner resides. When the tax is paid, the owner gets a receipt which must be presented at the Regional Veterinary Service office to register the dog. This tax may not be covered by the SOFA.

## **Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)**

You will often hear the term Status of Forces Agreement or SOFA during your assignment overseas. Each European country has distinct differences regarding what rights or responsibilities are included in the SOFA agreement that they have with the United States. The SOFA plays a vital role in guaranteeing fair treatment of Soldiers and their family members. It defines the legal status of U.S. (Sending State) personnel and property in the territory of the host nation. The purpose of such an agreement is to establish rights and responsibilities between the United States and the host nation government on matters such as the wearing of the uniform, carrying arms, taxes, entry and exit of personnel and property (for example, automobiles, personal weapons), resolving damage claims, and other activities such as postal, recreation, and banking. More importantly, SOFA deals with civil and criminal jurisdiction. They are a vital means by which the Department of Defense carries out its policy "to protect, to the maximum extent possible, the rights of United States personnel who may be subject to criminal trial by foreign courts and imprisonment in foreign prisons." All civilian employees and family members going overseas will be provided a SOFA certificate for their passport. Contact your local military passport section for more information on the SOFA certificate.