

Documentation of U.S. Citizens Born Abroad

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Q: I was born in 1982 in a U.S. military hospital in West Germany—my father was on active duty in the U.S. Army at the time. Last year, my parents both died, and I need a birth certificate. I am sure that my parents obtained a birth certificate at the time of my birth, but I have no idea where to start looking. Where do I go to get a duplicate birth certificate? Would the Department of Defense (DoD) have anything to do with this?

A: Go to http://travel.state.gov/family/family_issues/birth/birth_593.html#. This is part of the website of the U.S. Department of State (DOS).

The official record of your 1982 birth is a “Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America” or FS-240 form. The fact that your father was in the U.S. military at the time of your birth is essentially irrelevant for this purpose—the process would have been exactly the same if your father had been in West Germany as an employee of the Xerox Corporation. The patient affairs department of the military hospital probably assisted your parents in completing the necessary paperwork, but no one in DoD has access to any record of your birth 24 years ago.

To obtain a duplicate copy of the FS-240 form, you need to send a written request to Vital Records Section, Passport Services, 1111 19th St. NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20522-1705.

Your written request must be notarized, and you must include a copy of your valid photo identification (driver’s license, etc.). The written request must include:

1. Your full name at birth (plus any adoptive names).
2. Your date and place of birth.
3. The names of your parents.
4. The serial number, if known, of the FS-240 form.
5. Any available passport information.
6. Your signature.
7. A notarized affidavit for replacement FS-240 (available on the DOS website).

You must also enclose a check, money order, or bank draft in the amount of \$30, drawn on a U.S. bank, and payable to “Department of State.”

** Military title shown for purpose of identification only. CAPT Wright is a regular contributor to ROA’s Law Reviews. The views expressed are the personal views of the author, and not necessarily the views of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government*

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