



## TORII LEGAL ASSISTANCE

OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE



# THREE MORE REASONS TO HAVE A U.S. PASSPORT

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As most Soldiers know, they do not need a passport to come to Japan, and they do not need one to go back to the United States provided they are in possession of official travel orders AND in possession of a valid Military ID. The purpose of this article is to encourage Soldiers to obtain a tourist passport even if they don't think that they need one. If you want to get married on Okinawa, sponsor visitors from third countries, or tour/travel to other places in Asia while you are on this side of the world, it is a good idea to obtain a U.S. passport.

A U.S. passport is not only an important travel document, it is evidence of U.S. Citizenship.<sup>i</sup> Many of you will find times when you need to prove that you are a U.S. citizen. As most of you know, being a Soldier in the U.S. Army does not prove that you are a U.S. citizen.

We have many Soldiers that decide to get married in Japan. One thing that you need to do when you get married is to show proof of citizenship. If your proof is a birth certificate, you will need to get your birth certificate translated into Japanese (time and money). If your proof is a U.S. passport, you don't need to get it translated. Others want to invite (sponsor) friends or family to visit Okinawa from countries that require a Japanese tourist visa. Once again, proof of citizenship is demanded by the Japanese Embassies and Consulates in these countries. A Japanese form I reviewed recently asked for a passport (not birth certificate) as evidence of citizenship.

Finally, a U.S. passport will allow you to travel to countries that do not have an agreement with the United States to let you fly with only your ID card and orders. It is much more convenient to have a passport handy when you are planning such a trip.

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<sup>i</sup> If you were born in the United States, your original birth certificate is also evidence of citizenship. For others, a Certificate of Naturalization, or Consular Report of Birth Abroad