



Policies and Procedures for Obtaining Passports

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SUBJ: OFFICIAL PASSPORTS - INTERIM GUIDANCE

A. FOREIGN TRAVEL, PASSPORTS, AND VISAS, CI5000.5(SERIES)

1. This message supersedes the passport guidance in ref (a).
2. Background. The Coast Guard is involved in a wide range of international activities that require travel to, and/or assignment in foreign countries. Since September 2001, the United States has significantly tightened restrictions on travel to the U.S. by foreign nationals, and has increased its scrutiny of international travel documents. As a result, many countries are now reciprocating by requiring U.S. travelers to possess passports and in some cases, visas, where a valid government issued identification may have previously sufficed.
3. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) now requires (effective 23 Jan 2007) U.S. citizens to possess a valid passport to re-enter the U.S. by air from Canada and Mexico and by air, land, and sea for the remainder of the western hemisphere beginning on 1 Jan 2008. While this provision of WHTI will not apply to military personnel returning to the U.S. from abroad with a valid military identification card and travel orders, there is no assurance that a service member will be able to depart a foreign country while in transit to the U.S. without an official (red) passport.
4. Uncertainty about the new requirements has resulted in the Coast Guard requesting thousands of official passports for deploying operational units. Over the past twelve months alone, the state department has issued 2800 official passports to Coast Guard personnel, 1660 of these to cutter crew members. While each recipient did in fact travel to a foreign country as scheduled, less than ten percent were ever required to present their official passport. This practice, although providing field commanders with maximum operational flexibility, has come at a very high price and has been flagged by the Department of State as inconsistent with official passport issuance policy.
5. As a result of normal crew turnover, the Coast Guard is rapidly approaching a point where we will begin returning thousands of unstamped/unused official passports to the State Department. This will be viewed by the State Department as an abuse of the system and could damage our important working relationship with the special issuance office. At the very least, it will highlight that our current policy of issuing official passports to all deploying units is at best, unnecessarily excessive and at worst, a serious waste of resources.
6. Policy. Effective immediately, official passports shall only be issued to Coast Guard personnel whose official duties are expected to result in international travel into or out of a country requiring that U.S. service personnel present an official passport to enter or exit that country (see <https://www.fcg.pentagon.mil> (secure website, limited internet access)). In such cases, personnel shall only use diplomatic (black) or official (red) passports as credentials. In those countries where official passports are not required, other accepted forms of identification such as military ID and orders shall suffice. Official passports shall not be issued to deploying crews based solely on the prospect of a mid-patrol break or logistics stop in a foreign country.

7. Definitions.

a. Official passport. Official (no fee) passports are issued by the Department of State Special Issuance Agency, Washington, DC, to those government personnel (and their dependents) whose position/billet requires international travel. In addition, certain non-foreign PDSs require official passports (e.g., Guam, D17 (if traveling through Canada enroute new PDS)). Official passports are red in color (except for dependent no-fee passports which are blue) and expire after five years.

b. Diplomatic passport. Diplomatic passports are issued by the Department of State Special Issuance Agency, Washington, DC, to those government personnel (and their dependents) who are stationed at U.S. embassies in foreign countries. Diplomatic passports are black in color and expire after five years.

c. Tourist passport. Tourist passports may be obtained from any U.S. Passport agency at member initiative and expense for personal international travel. Under no circumstances should a tourist passport be used to enter a foreign country for official government business. In accordance with JFTR annex g, fees for tourist passports are reimbursable (and must be approved by the order issuing authority) when travel on official orders is to a high threat area or high risk airport (as defined by the Department of State) by commercial air and the member is authorized to obtain and use a tourist passport. Tourist passports are blue in color and expire after ten years.

d. Passport acceptance agent. A person who has received State Department training and certification to verify identity documents and administer oaths in support of passport applications.

8. Applicability.

a. The following categories of personnel shall be issued official or diplomatic passports, as appropriate:

- (1) Personnel and dependents permanently stationed in a foreign country (to include dependents assigned to Guam).
- (2) Flag officers/SES and aides whose duties require international travel
- (3) Members of international Training Division (ITD) Yorktown
- (4) Members of PSUS, TACLETS, MSSTS, MSRT, and NSF units.
- (5) Members of U.S. delegations to international organizations and FORA (e.g., International Maritime Organization, International Labor Organization, International Association of Lighthouse Authorities, North Pacific Coast Guard Forum).
- (6) Foreign port liaisons and auditors.
- (7) Air Station personnel whose duties require international travel.
- (8) Personnel assigned to traveling support and logistics teams whose duties require regular international travel (e.g., MLC assist teams, GTMO aviation detachment).

b. All other personnel shall be issued official passports on an as-needed in support of specific international travel.

c. Cutter crews scheduled for out-of-hemisphere deployments shall only be issued official passports when anticipating a port call in a country that specifically requires passports as a condition of debarking the vessel on liberty (e.g., China).

d. LANTAREA cutter crews scheduled for within-hemisphere deployments shall not normally be issued official passports. However, in the Eastern Pacific (EPAC), only Canada, Panama, and Costa Rica allow personnel to enter and depart without an official passport. Therefore PACAREA WHEC/WMEC crews will be issued official passports as part of preparations for upcoming EPAC deployments. We are in the process of engaging several EPAC countries (e.g., Mexico, Ecuador) through diplomatic channels to determine the feasibility of allowing USCG members to arrive and depart without official passports. Depending on the response we receive, the requirement for PACAREA WHEC/WMEC crews to receive official passports may be reduced.

9. Issuing procedures.

a. Upon receipt of PCS orders to a unit/office listed in Para 8, above, member must apply for an official/diplomatic passport. For other personnel, apply in time to meet foreign travel requirements. MLC or ISC will facilitate the application process for personnel outside the Washington, DC area. CG-00I shall provide passport services for personnel in the Washington, Dc area. All applicants for official and diplomatic passports must provide a foreign destination and timeframe on their application except for personnel assigned to or in receipt of order s to PSUS, TACLETS, MSSTS, MSRT, and NSF units.

b. Officer/enlisted/civilian personnel scheduled for tdy travel to a foreign country via a commercial carrier: consult the DOD Foreign Clearance Guide (<https://www.fcg.pentagon.mil> (secure website, limited internet access)) to verify that a passport is required before beginning the application process. Direct questions to CG-00I.

c. Officer/enlisted personnel scheduled to embark or debark a cutter in a foreign port: If an official passport is required for entry into the country of embarkation/debarkation, then apply for a passport via MLC, ISC, or CG-00I, as appropriate.

10. Passport application process.

a. The most updated information, forms, detailed instructions, and illustrative examples are maintained on the CG-00I internet site: <http://www.uscg.mil/international>.

b. Passport acceptance agents are available at servicing ISCS and MLCS to assist with and verify passport applications. A complete listing of these agents and their locations is available in the international affairs community of CG Central and on the CG-00I internet site.

c. Once CG-00I submits an application, the Department of State special issuance agency requires 8-10 weeks to produce an official passport (applications received directly by the State department from any unit or office other than CG-00I will be rejected). The Department of State Special Issuance Agency will not respond to inquiries about the production status of a passport unless the request is from CG-00I

11. Official passport security.

a. Official and diplomatic passports are the property of the U.S. Government, not the individuals to whom they are issued.

b. Unit commanders whose missions require infrequent foreign travel (e.g., cutter crews), are highly encouraged to designate an official passport custodian who is responsible for maintaining custody of unit official passports when they are not in use. Official passports shall be afforded the same level of security as unit health and personnel records.

c. Unit commanders whose missions require frequent foreign travel may elect to allow travelers to hold their own official passports.

12. Passport tracking. To facilitate unit accountability for passports and allow for CG-00I passport workload forecasting, [Direct Access has a passport tracking module](#). Data entry shall be done as below:

a. Personnel who have a valid official passport: The PDS will coordinate with their SPO to [enter the passport data into Direct Access](#). For personnel in the Washington, DC area, CG-00I can perform this function.

b. Personnel who apply for a new passport or renewal: Upon issue, CG-00I will enter the passport data into Direct Access prior to forwarding the passport to the member.

13. Additional guidance will be reflected in an upcoming COMDTINST.

14. Points of contact:

a. Passport issuance policy. CDR Chris Smith 202-372-4470, christopher.m.smith5(at)uscg.mil.

b. Passport issuance procedure. YN1 Mike Liburd 202-372-4473, michael.d.liburd(at)uscg.mil or YN1 Jennifer bell 202-372-4474, jennifer.k.bell(at)uscg.mil.

15. Internet release authorized.

16. Released by Katherine E. Johnson, Director of International Affairs and Foreign Policy advisor.

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