

04-159

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to Their Excellencies and Messieurs and Mesdames the Chiefs of Mission and has the honor to restate the policies and procedures regarding airport screening courtesies for senior officials of cabinet minister rank or above departing from U.S. airports. The subject was last brought to the attention of the Chiefs of Mission in the Department's circular diplomatic note No. 04-10 dated February 6, 2004.

The program provides a Department of State escort officer for cabinet ministers and above, accompanying spouses and children under the age of twelve, who are not already being escorted by a United States Secret Service or Diplomatic Security Service protective detail. The rank of the cabinet minister should be equivalent to the rank of Cabinet Secretary in the United States Government, i.e., the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense. Members of the delegation accompanying the escorted official will be subject to customary screening.

The Chiefs of Mission are advised that requests from missions for escort officers should strictly comply with the policies and procedures outlined in the circular diplomatic note of February 6, 2004, which are restated below:

1. Missions are required to complete a request form located on the website for OFM (www.state.gov/ofm). The website includes information and instructions for completing the form. The Office of Foreign Missions will not accept forms submitted by consular posts.

2. Completed request forms should be downloaded and saved on the mission's computer. The form must then be filed on-line with the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) as an e-mail attachment. The e-mail with the attached form should be sent to Escortscreening@state.gov at least three full business days (i.e. Monday through Friday, excluding U.S. holidays and weekends) prior to the anticipated date of the first departure from a U.S. airport. A request submitted Friday morning, for example, for a departure the following Monday does not meet the above criteria and is unlikely to be accommodated. Missions should also note that the term "departure" refers to any flight from a U.S. airport regardless of destination, and not just to flights from U.S. airports to destinations outside the U.S.

3. To expedite the review of a request, missions should list the surname or family name in capital letters and match the spelling of the name on the individual's visa.

4. A separate request must be submitted for each person for whom screening courtesies are sought even if they have the same itinerary. Information on the number (not names) of additional persons who may be accompanying the individual(s) under escort, but not entitled to screening courtesies themselves, would be helpful to the escort officer and TSA.

5. The Embassy Point-of-Contact (POC) designated on the form must be available at all times before departure to receive calls from the assigned escort officer. Since failure to confirm dates, time, and location of departures may prevent the escort officer from arriving at the airport, specific contact information, including a daytime and after-hours telephone number, is mandatory. If there are multiple departure airports and more than one POC, contact information for each POC must be included.

6. Upon receipt of a request by e-mail, OFM will respond by e-mail or telephone advising whether the request has been approved or denied. All subsequent arrangements for escort courtesies shall be made directly between the POC(s) and the escort officer(s) assigned to the departure from a particular airport.

7. The airport screening courtesy program addresses departures from airports and does not affect the "Expedited Port Courtesies" program for arriving dignitaries administered by the Office of Protocol. However, missions which request a protective detail from the United States Secret Service or Diplomatic Security Service through the "Expedited Port Courtesies" program should not also request courtesy escorts through the airport courtesies program administered by the Office of Foreign Missions.

8. Additional reception services that may be available from municipal protocol authorities or airline representatives are also separate from the airport screening courtesies program administered by the Department's Office of Foreign Missions.

The security of the traveling public is paramount and the extension of airport screening courtesies must be consistent with this requirement. The Department looks forward to the continued cooperation of the Chiefs of Mission in complying with the procedures for requesting such courtesies and for their understanding of the reasons for its limited use. Questions about the program should be directed to OFM at (202) 647-4554.

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Washington,



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