

MS 835 International Mail and Distribution Procedures

Effective Date: July 6, 2011

Responsible Office: Post Logistics and Support (M/AS/PLS)

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1.0 Purpose

This Procedural Guide sets forth Peace Corps guidance regarding international mail and pouch services.

2.0 Authority

39 USC Sec. 101; 6 FAM; 14 FAM; MS 835

3.0 State Department Diplomatic Pouch

A sealed container used for international transmission of official communications of the United States Government. The service is operated and controlled by the Department of State.

The term “diplomatic pouch” includes both the official pouch (which has a Washington, DC, ZIP code) and the personal pouch (which has a Dulles, VA, ZIP code). Materials sent through the official pouch do not require postage. The official pouch should not be used for personal correspondence or personal packages. The U.S. Postal Service irradiates mail sent via USPS to an official pouch address (meaning, items sent from outside the State Department with regular postage), causing both delays and possible damage.

The Department of State's diplomatic pouch is the primary mail system used between PC/Washington and posts.

3.1 Restrictions

3.1.1 Content

Refer to 14 FAM, Section 723 for a list of prohibited items.

3.1.2 Size and Weight

- Maximum weight limitation is 250 pounds per week.
- Maximum dimensions are: length 26 inches, height 16 inches, width 13 inches; for a total of 84 inches length and girth combined, or 6 cubic feet per dispatch.

The State Department allows the use of the diplomatic pouch system for shipment of official cargo provided the size, weight and characteristics of the shipment fall below the bulk shipment threshold. The Diplomatic Pouch facility rigorously enforces bulk shipment regulations stipulated in *Secstate 169076* and *Secstate 154557*. Any shipment which has a combined piece volume over 6 cubic feet (roughly the size of five 8.5" x 11" Xerox copy paper boxes), per weekly pouch dispatch destined to the same addressee, will be identified as a bulk shipment. Any shipment arriving at the pouch facility which exceeds 6 cubic feet must be funded by post before shipping. The pouch faculty will provide you with a quote for the shipping and directions on forwarding a valid accounting strip.

NOTE: Pouches are sent on commercial airlines as air cargo. Passenger baggage and critical supplies have priority when space is limited.

3.2 Volunteer Use

The State Department diplomatic pouch may be used by V/Ts for the shipment of the following items:

- Items vital for health and welfare of V/Ts, e. g., prescription medicines and eyeglasses.
- Legal or financial documents, such as checks and money orders.
- Items and supplies required for ongoing or new Peace Corps programs and training projects, e. g., books, visual aids, and tools. All checks, documents, or supplies in the category of project-related materials will be pouched by the Country Desk Officer to the V/T, in care of the Peace Corps Country Director, if the Country Director has approved in writing and in advance such use of the pouch. Approval should be documented by memorandum, telegram, cable, or e-mail. The written approval from the Country Director must indicate the name of the V/T and the items authorized. Blanket authorizations (e.g., books for agriculture Volunteers) will not be accepted. Items received by the Country Desk Officer which the Country Director has not certified will be returned to the sender. When projects requiring extensive pouch support are initiated, the Country Desk Officer should notify the Mail Manager, Post Logistics and Support (M/AS/PLS) by memo in advance, identifying the project(s) dates, types of material, and approximate total weight of material per project.

Section 15(b) of the Peace Corps Act authorizes payment of expenses in connection with the transportation of the personal effects of the Volunteers abroad. Such expenses include the cost of replacing project related materials lost in transit via the diplomatic pouch that are essential to the effective continuation of the Volunteer's work. (Receipts will be accepted as evidence that materials were lost in transit through the diplomatic pouch system). See *MS 235 Volunteer/Trainee Losses of Property and Cash*, for reimbursement information.

Project-related materials shipped through the pouch should be for use and retention in-country, but exceptions may be made by the Country Director on a case-by-case basis. In special circumstances, as authorized by the Country Director, these materials may be shipped back to the United States as excess baggage or via pouch, whichever is determined by the Country Director to be most cost effective.

3.3 Pouch Criteria

The Pouch contains only unclassified material. These pouches are transported by commercial air carriers as air cargo. Materials sent or received via pouch are categorized as follows:

- Unregistered material -- Official correspondence and other pouch-eligible items not considered sensitive to the Peace Corps.
- Registered material -- Official correspondence and other pouch-eligible items considered sensitive to the Peace Corps and warranting Department of State registry control (see paragraph 7.4):
 - Treasury checks
 - Medical records
 - Security material
 - Personnel information
 - Peace Corps contracts

Magazines and newspapers may also be sent via the personal diplomatic pouch. All parcels should be securely packed and sealed. Insured and registered mail services are not available for items sent through the pouch and the Department accepts no liability for loss or damage.

The Department of State has a separate ZIP code for personal mail to support personnel assigned to non-APO/FPO posts overseas. Mail sent to this address will not be irradiated. U.S. citizen direct hire members of the foreign affairs community and their family members may receive via the personal pouch letters and packages at a maximum size limit of 17x18x32 inches (no single dimension can exceed this limit) and maximum weight of 50 pounds.

NOTE: Some posts have special size and weight restrictions in effect because of host government decisions or aircraft size limitations.

Address this mail using the following address format example:

JOHN DOE
2010 ABIDJAN PLACE (or PL)
DULLES VA 20189-2010

When using the Dulles, VA, ZIP code, for security reasons, nothing in the address field should reference in any way the mission, the office, your job title, or anything official about where you work.

NOTE: Using express mail services does not get mail to a post any quicker because the express mail service is only from the point of origin to Dulles. Packages may be mailed at any post office in the United States or sent to the State Department by United Parcel Service, FedEx, DHL, or other non-postal means of transportation (although these also only speed the material to the Dulles starting point).

3.4 Addressing Pouch Mail

3.4.1 PC/Washington to Overseas Posts

Envelopes or labels for transmittals to a Peace Corps post must be addressed to the Country Director (see the Peace Corps Staff Directory for addresses). If material is for a V/T or a staff member, the envelope or label should still be addressed to the Country Director, with an attention line indicating to whom the material is directed.

Address this mail using the following address format example:

PEACE CORPS COUNTRY DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
2340 MASERU PLACE
WASHINGTON DC 20521-2340

When preparing envelopes for mailing from PC/Washington, the sender should include the official office symbol and room number with the return address. Envelopes must also be clearly marked *UNCLASSIFIED*. The following envelopes, available through the Office of Administrative Services (M/AS), are authorized for air pouch:

- Preprinted with *VIA POUCH* and *CLASSIFICATION*:
PCE 202 4 1/8 x 9 1/2 (white and blue)
- Need to be marked with *VIA POUCH* and *UNCLASSIFIED*:
PCE 216 4 1/8 x 9 1/2 (white with window)
PCE 219 6 x 9 (Kraft)
PCE 204 9 x 12 (Kraft)
PCE 203 12 x 16 (Kraft)

3.4.2 Overseas Posts to the U.S.

Official mail addressed to PC/Washington should be addressed to the organizational office whenever possible.

Address this mail using the following address format examples:

PEACE CORPS
AF/CDU COUNTRY DESK OFFICER - BENIN
1111 20TH STREET, NW
WASHINGTON DC 20526

If the mail is intended for a specific individual, add an "Attention" line.

ATTN: WILLIAM S. JONES
PEACE CORPS OPBF/F/AO

1111 20TH STREET, NW
WASHINGTON DC 20526

3.5 Registered Pouch Mail

For a definition of registered materials, see paragraph 3.3.

3.5.1 PC/Washington to Overseas Posts

Offices that have the *State Diplomatic Pouch Mail Registration Form (Optional Form 120)* should follow these steps in preparing their registered pouch mail:

- Fill in the required information on the control portion of the *Optional Form 120*.
Maintain a file of the control portions in case tracing action is required. The control file is to be retained by the originating office for one (1) year as a record of material registered for dispatch.
- Separate the *REGISTERED* gummed label from the *Optional Form 120* and place the label on the upper right adjacent to the address label. The label should be secured by taping all four edges with transparent tape.
- Enter *Unclassified* for Peace Corps' *CLASSIFICATION* because Peace Corps has no authority on its own to classify material.

All other offices must label and bring registered air pouch packages to the Registry Clerk in the Mail Center.

3.5.2 Receiving Registered Mail at PC/Washington

The Mail Center will deliver registered mail to the addressee or another employee on his/her behalf and collect a signature.

3.5.3 Registered Mail to U.S. Addresses Other Than PC/Washington

Official, registered pouch mail addressed to offices other than PC/Washington (e.g., Regional Recruitment Offices) will be forwarded to addressee from State Department.

3.5.4 Registered Mail at Overseas Posts

Overseas posts will follow the instructions of the Embassy Registry Clerk in sending and receiving registered pouch mail.

3.6 Personal Mail

See paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 for restrictions on using the pouch for personal mail.

The USPS guidelines and acceptance procedure for Dulles personal pouch mail can be found at: <http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm#wp1113914>.

3.6.1 Overseas Staff to the U.S.

There are three ways you may send mail to the United States from overseas: by international postal service, APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service, or Department of State Pouch and Mail Services.

All personal mail sent by Peace Corps staff to addresses in the U. S. must include sufficient U.S. postage for delivery in the United States. Mail without correct postage will be returned to the sender.

3.6.2 U.S. to Overseas Staff

All personal mail to be pouched to Peace Corps staff overseas should be sent to the pouch address in the Peace Corps Staff Directory. If mailed from a location other than Peace Corps, the mail must be addressed to Washington, DC with the ZIP code.

3.7 Mail between Peace Corps Posts

Mail between Peace Corps posts should be pouched directly to the other Peace Corps post. Do not send mail to another Peace Corps post via Washington, except to those Posts without State Department pouch service.

4.0 Military Postal Service (MPS), Army/Air Force Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO)

The Military Postal Service (MPS), an extension of the United States Postal Service, is designed to provide postal service to members of the U.S. Armed Forces and other authorized agencies and individuals as determined by the Department of Defense. Peace Corps employees may use this service when approved by all of the following: the Country Director, Regional Director, and Postal Officer in country. Approving officials should weigh the effect of MPS use on the Peace Corps in-country and approve its use only if use of such service is clearly necessary for maintaining personal communications with the United States.

If your post has these facilities, you may use them to send letters and packages to the United States. Customs declarations are required for all packages and letter-sized envelopes containing anything other than correspondence. Each letter or parcel must include your APO/FPO return address and appropriate U.S. postage.

Packages are usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length and girth combined).

4.1 Volunteer Use

Generally, V/Ts may not use the MPS. The same restrictions that apply to V/Ts' use of the diplomatic pouch apply to the MPS. See paragraph 3.2.

4.2 Addressing MPS Mail

The procedures for addressing mail and all weight restrictions for MPS are the same as for the United States Postal System.

Address APO/FPO mail using the following address format example:

ATTN: STEVE WILSON
PEACE CORPS COUNRTY DIRECTOR
AMERICAN EMBASSY RABAT
PSC 74 BOX 006
APO AE 09718-5000

NOTE: Be sure to verify each post's preferred address format. An additional line may be added below the person's name to help sort mail at large posts. Do not add job titles, embassy names, or locations unless directly instructed to do so; this information can cause confusion and delay arrival.

4.3 Delivery of MPS Mail

MPS shipments are normally delivered to the addressee within 10 to 14 days from mailing.

5.0 Diplomatic Post Office (DPO)

As the Department provides diplomatic pouch service for official mail to all posts, DPO should only be used for personal mail. DPO mail is not afforded the same detailed level of tracking as Integrated Logistics Management System-pouched items and does not always receive inspections-free passage under the Vienna Convention. Ref. 14 FAM 761.4-1 Official Mail in the DPO (*CT: LOG-59; 05-06-2009*)

The DPO cannot be used to transport official bulk supplies. Official unclassified bulk supplies for posts must be transported through the Department's U.S. Despatch Agency, international mail, or via commercial transportation companies. Limited amounts of official unclassified supplies may be sent through the diplomatic pouch; see 14 FAM 723.1 (b). Official classified supplies must be sent through the classified diplomatic pouch. Ref. 14 FAM 761.4-2 Official Supplies in the DPO (*CT: LOG-59; 05-06-2009*)

6.0 Expedited Mail Service

Commercial mail services (e.g., DHL, FedEx, UPS) used for sending time-sensitive documents or items, or for mailing to locations where Diplomatic Pouch and MPS (APO/FPO) facilities or services are not available.

Expedited mail services are the most expensive methods of shipment and should be used only when absolutely necessary or cost effective.

6.1 Preparation of shipment

Any item shipped using expedited mail service must be properly packaged and sealed before submission to the Mail Center. Packaging materials are available in the Mail Center and staff members can provide packaging guidance upon request. The Mail Center is not responsible for any unpackaged items left in the facility and these items will not be processed for shipment.

PC 502, Request for Expedited Mail Service, must be filled out completely, to include the name and telephone number of an individual that may be contacted if there are questions/problems regarding shipment. Unless the shipper's office has received a written exemption, international shipments require the signature of either the Mail Manager; Chief, Post Logistics and Support; or the Chief, Administrative Services.

When applicable, the submitting office must complete the customs declaration/commercial invoice and provide correct insurance values for all international shipments.

Expedited mail requests received after 3:30 p.m. will be processed for shipment the following business day. Expedited mail services are the most expensive methods of shipment and should be used only when absolutely necessary or cost effective.

6.2 Delivery

International shipments normally arrive at the destination within 5 days of mailing. However, the in-country Customs Office may delay the delivery of the shipment during clearance processing.

7.0 International Postal Service (Air Mail) and Air Freight Service

The commercial mail service (e. g., DHL, FedEx, UPS, U.S. Postal Service, other government postal services) whose facilities may be used for transmitting unclassified official correspondence when:

- It is financially or otherwise advantageous to the U.S. Government.
- Pouch service is not available.
- Material is unauthorized for pouch service.

International mail service is available around the world. However, this service may not be reliable. Be sure to find out before giving out or using an international address and investigate the reliability of the service before using this option.

Commercial freight service (e. g., Global Transport, Singapore Airlines-Air Cargo, United Van Lines) should be used for transmitting cold chain, perishable and bulk good items or goods requiring special handling.

7.1 Weight Restrictions

International air mail should be restricted to packages of 2 pounds or less because of high cost. Weight limitations, costs, and requirements for customs forms vary from country to country.

International air freight has no weight limitation.

7.2 International Postal Service (Air Mail) and Air Freight Service from PC/Washington to Overseas Posts

7.2.1 Air Mail

All envelopes intended for international air mail must be marked, clearly and prominently, *VIA AIR MAIL*.

7.2.2 Air Freight

International air freight has no weight limitation; therefore, it should be used for all supplies and equipment not authorized for diplomatic pouch or international air mail. Such materials should be shipped by commercial carrier using an *SF 1103, Government Bill of Lading (GBL)*. Materials shipped via GBL do not require customs forms. Domestic staff can contact the Office of Post Logistics and Support (M/AS/PLS) for guidance and assistance when processing air freight shipments of office and medical supplies, equipment, and other property to include hazardous materials and perishable goods for overseas delivery.

7.3 International Postal Service (Air Mail) and Air Freight Service from Overseas Posts to PC/Washington

7.4 Mailing Government Checks

Special consideration and caution must be exercised with the mailing of U.S. Treasury checks. Checks to be mailed to Peace Corps Posts from PC/Washington are the responsibility of the Office of Volunteers and PSC Financial Services (CFO/VPS) and Office of Global Accounts Payable (OGAP). Checks mailed from CFO/VPS are normally sent by express courier and controlled and tracked through the courier system.

A U.S. Treasury check arriving at post for a V/T or staff member no longer at post must be forwarded by express courier to the appropriate Financial Management Specialist at the Peace Corps Headquarters for cancellation.

7.5 World Wise Schools (WWS) Mail

A Volunteer participating in the WWS program (VS/PE/WWS) will be reimbursed, in his/her living allowance, for postage on one letter (per match) per month. (A Volunteer matched with two teachers will be reimbursed for two letters per month.) Country Directors have the discretion

to increase the living allowances of only those Volunteers enrolled in the WWS program or of all Volunteers by the equivalent amount.

7.6 Delivery

International air mail is normally delivered to the addressee within 4 to 8 days and international air freight shipments are generally delivered within 3 to 5 days from the date of shipment.

8.0 Distribution Procedures from PC/Washington

8.1 Inter-Agency (Internal) Distribution

Offices may distribute printed materials by using the Mail Center (for headquarters distribution) or the mailing services contractor (for overseas post and Regional Office distribution). The office codes found in the Peace Corps Staff Directory should be used for Agency distribution.

8.1.1 Distribution Requests to the Mail Center

Offices should provide the items to be distributed and distribution keys/instructions to the Project Manager, Mail Center.

8.1.2 Distribution Requests to the Mailing Services Contractor

Offices shall submit a *PC 1539, Task Order Request for Mailing Services*, via e-mail to the Office of Administrative Services (M/AS). Include a description of the service to be performed on the Task Order. Electronic task ordering process is in effect. The *PC 1539* can be used or an e-mail request will suffice.

Mailing labels for overseas posts may be requested from the mailing services contractor by Task Order.

8.2 Outgoing (External) Distribution

For distributions outside the Agency, offices should supply the Mail Center with mailing labels and items to be mailed. Any self-adhesive labels may be used.