

## **5 FAM 340**

# **DIPLOMATIC POUCH MAIL**

*(TL:IM-44: 10-17-2003)*  
*(Office of Origin: A/IRM/BPC/RG)*

## **5 FAM 341 GENERAL POLICIES**

*(TL:IM-27; 10-01-1999)*

a. The Vienna Convention and international law limit the use of diplomatic pouches to correspondence and items for official use. The Department permits U.S. citizen employees to use pouches to transmit limited amounts of mail, when it is determined to be in the best interest of the Department.

b. Within strictly supervised limits, regular U.S. government employees and their dependents may use the diplomatic pouch for mail. Mail is sent in the pouch solely at the risk of the sender. The Department assumes no responsibility for mail in the pouch.

(1) Eligible items are letters, flats, and parcels of regular U.S. citizen employees of the Federal Government (and their dependents) who are assigned to posts overseas that do not have Military Postal Service (MPS) support.

(2) At hardship posts eligible employees and dependents may receive unprohibited foodstuffs through the pouch in limited amounts per calendar year. An employee may receive additional amounts of foodstuffs in special circumstances with approval from the Department (A/LM/PMP/DPM). Make the request through the administrative officer.

c. Postage at the appropriate U.S. domestic rate must be affixed to mail for pouch transmission. Diplomatic Pouch Mail without postage transmitted by pouch violates the Private Express Statutes 39 U.S.C. 601-606 and 18 U.S.C. 1693-1699 and 1724.

d. Individuals, organizations, and businesses are not authorized to use the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Service facilities to send unsolicited advertisements in the form of mass mailings or any other form to individuals at posts.

## **5 FAM 342 RESPONSIBILITIES**

*(TL:IM-27; 10-01-1999)*

### **a. DOMESTIC**

(1) Department managers, supervisors, and employees are responsible for ensuring efficient use of the diplomatic pouch based on 5 FAM 300 and 5 FAH-10.

(2) Department managers must ensure that all pouch users are aware of the policies in this chapter and procedures in 5 FAH-10 governing the use of the diplomatic pouch by authorized employees and U.S. government agencies to ensure that pouch abuse does not occur. When abuse does occur, Department managers must take action to correct the problem.

(3) A/LM/PMP/DPM will interpret rules and regulations and make decisions if requested to do so.

### **b. ABROAD**

(1) Post management must develop post specific procedures based on 5 FAM 300 and 5 FAH-10 to control employee use of the pouch to send and receive mail. A/LM/PMP/DPM will interpret rules and regulations and make decisions if requested to do so.

(2) Post management must establish criteria based on 5 FAM 300 and 5 FAH-10 for what constitutes pouch abuse at post. If the post determines an employee has abused the pouch, the post may suspend the employee's pouch privileges after consulting with A/LM/PMP/DPM. Post management must document all circumstances surrounding the suspension.

(3) Post management must implement procedures established in 5 FAH-10 and post specific procedures to ensure all authorized pouch users understand pouch limitations and the consequences of abusing pouch privileges.

c. A/LM/PMP/DPM will grant authority to obtain reimbursement based on 31 U.S.C. 9701, Fees and Charges for Government Services and Things of Value, for the transportation costs of unauthorized shipments of material via the pouch. However, the abuse or misuse may be investigated further by appropriate law enforcement officials depending on the seriousness of the incident. Department and post managers must document each incident, describing circumstances and providing weights to determine the transportation costs between point of origin and destination.

d. Other US Government agencies are responsible for the items originating at their offices by their personnel. Use procedures identified in 5 FAH-10 H-515 to identify misuse and abuse.

## **5 FAM 343 RESTRICTIONS ON USING DIPLOMATIC POUCH MAIL**

### **5 FAM 343.1 Department of State Contract Employees**

*(TL:IM-27; 01-30-1998)*

Department of State contract employees are not automatically granted full access to the pouch for mail.

(1) To use the pouch contract employees must be U.S. citizens, hired in the U.S. to perform official U.S. Government work overseas for a specific period of time.

(2) Local hire contractors overseas are not authorized to use the pouch.

### **5 FAM 343.2 Other Agency Employees and Contract Employees**

*(TL:IM-24; 01-30-1998)*

a. Other agency employees and U. S. citizen contract employees of other agencies have limited pouch use for mail only when:

(1) The other agency agrees to reimburse the Department for the cost of transporting the contractor's employees' mail;

(2) The other agency agrees to receive, sort, and bundle mail for the final destination, then deliver it to the Department for pouching.

(3) The other agency agrees to receive mail of its contract employees from the pouch and distribute it.

b. U.S. citizens, contract employees and/or those U.S. citizens performing AID financed functions under specific support grants or cooperative agreements with AID are authorized use of the diplomatic pouch under the following conditions and limitations:

(1) Official mail should have a maximum weight of 2 pounds for enveloped documents and be addressed as follows:

Name of individual or Organization  
(followed by letter C (contractor) or G (grant))  
Name of Post  
Agency for International Development (AID)  
Washington, DC. 20523

(2) Mail should be addressed as above without the name of the organization. The maximum weight for mail is two pounds. AID contract personnel are not authorized to receive merchandise parcels, magazines, and newspapers in the pouch channel.

(3) Local hire contractors are not authorized pouch usage.

### **5 FAM 343.3 Fulbright Grantees**

*(TL:IM-27; 10-01-1999)*

a. Fulbright grantees are authorized to make a one-time shipment of educational materials to the American Embassy or Consulate in the country of assignment. This shipment cannot exceed four boxes, none of which may weigh more than 40 pounds. These materials cannot be sent back to the United States by pouch. Address these packages to:

Cultural Affairs Officer,  
AmEmbassy (CITY)  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20521-xxxx

The grantee's name must appear in the return address.

b. Fulbright grantees assigned to a country with a Category B post may use the pouch for letter mail up to two pounds to and from the United States. Letters must be addressed as follows:

Jane Doe, Fulbright  
Amembassy (CITY)  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20521-xxxx

Grantees will use this address as the return address on all mail from abroad.

### **5 FAM 343.4 Peace Corps Volunteers**

*(TL:IM-27; 10-01-1999)*

a. Peace Corps volunteers are not authorized use of the pouch for mail. They may receive, in emergencies, items vital for health such as prescription medicines and eyeglasses and legal or financial documents.

b. Peace Corps administrative personnel such as the Director and Associate Director are accorded full pouch privileges along with other U. S. citizen Foreign Service personnel and their families.

c. Requests for exceptions for Peace Corps volunteers use of the pouch for sending and receiving letter mail only must be addressed to Peace Corps headquarters Washington and the Department of State (A/LM/PMP/DPM).

## **5 FAM 343.5 Schools Abroad**

*(TL:IM-44; 10-17-2003)*

a. Normally schools abroad are not authorized use of the diplomatic pouch or the military postal facility for shipment of official bulk supplies such as books and equipment. U. S. government-sponsored schools are authorized to use the Dispatch Agency for shipment of bulk materials (see paragraph e below).

b. A/OPR/OS-assisted schools are authorized to use the diplomatic pouch for first class official letter mail, i.e. invoices, testing material, correspondence etc. For this purpose the best address format to use is Administrative Officer (FOR NAME OF SCHOOL).

c. Employees of the U.S. government sponsored schools are not authorized to use the diplomatic pouch or the military postal facility for mail.

d. Emergency orders, short falls, testing materials, educational pamphlets and periodicals, video cassettes, transcripts, correspondence and similar materials other than bulk orders may be sent via the military postal system or the diplomatic pouch. Every attempt to use the Dispatch Agency must be made before using the military postal facility or the diplomatic pouch. Emergency orders for books and/educational materials being sent via APO/FPO channels (DOD Postal Manual, Volume 1, Appendix A, paragraph g) or the diplomatic pouch must be approved by the Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS).

e. Established procedures for shipping books and other educational materials through the U.S. Dispatch Agencies are in *6 FAM 195.1*. Post administrative officers and school representatives must implement these procedures to realize the benefits of timely shipments and reduced costs.

## **5 FAM 343.6 U.S. Firms and Other Private Organizations**

*(TL:IM-24; 01-30-1998)*

a. In extreme emergencies, the Chief of Mission or the officer acting may authorize U. S. firms, individuals, charitable institutions and similar

organizations to transmit business correspondence on a temporary basis. Immediately thereafter, the circumstances must be reported to the Assistant Secretary responsible for pouch and mail operations by telegram.

b. In non-emergency cases, approval must be requested from the Assistant Secretary responsible for pouch and mail operations in advance. The request must include full justification for the exception.

## **5 FAM 343.7 Diplomatic Correspondence of Foreign Governments and International Organizations**

*(TL:IM-24; 01-30-1998)*

a. In isolated instances, the Chief of Mission or the officer acting may authorize sending official correspondence of a foreign government or an international organization by pouch if it is clearly in the interest of the U. S. Government. In all cases, transmitting such correspondence must be approved in advance by the Assistant Secretary responsible for pouch and mail operations. Requests must include justification for departing from established policy. The Department will not normally approve requests for exceptions when the same commercial services used by the Department are available to the foreign government or international organization.

b. When the Post or the Department authorizes this, the correspondence must be processed and distributed the same way official correspondence is dispatched.

## **5 FAM 343.8 Foreign Students Traveling to the U.S. for Educational Purposes**

*(TL:IM-24; 01-30-1998)*

a. Department of Defense military assistance programs involving foreign student travel to the U.S. for educational purposes is the responsibility of the Defense representative at post.

b. Students should be advised to hand carry course materials when they return. However, if this is impracticable, foreign students may use the pouch if an APO/FPO is not available only to return course material from the U.S. to post.

c. The Defense representative is responsible for ensuring that the course material is addressed properly (to his/her office) and forwarded to the student. The Defense representative is also responsible for ensuring that students do not include goods or merchandise within a course material container.

d. The post Pouch Control Officer is authorized to inspect incoming material if necessary.

## **5 FAM 343.9 U.S. Citizens Living Abroad and Locally Hired U.S. Citizens**

*(TL:IM-35: 12-05-2002)*

a. A U.S. citizen living abroad who is not assigned to post for a tour of duty, does not possess an official or diplomatic passport, and is not on temporary duty status may not use the diplomatic pouch for mail. Any U.S. citizen may use Military Postal Service facilities (APO/FPO) or diplomatic pouch for mailing balloting material in all circumstances. This includes post card applications, ballots, voting instructions and envelopes.

b. U.S. citizen employees hired locally are not authorized to use the pouch to send and receive mail unless that employee is the spouse or a dependent of an authorized pouch user.

## **5 FAM 343.10 Congress**

*(TL:IM-24; 01-30-1998)*

Congressional mail is sent and received via pouch when U.S. (including military) and international postal systems are inappropriate. See 5 FAH-10 for more details.

## **5 FAM 344 THROUGH 349 UNASSIGNED**