

# MS 835 International Mail and Distribution

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## **1.0 Purpose**

This Manual Section sets forth Peace Corps policy regarding international mail and pouch services.

## **2.0 Authority**

39 USC Sec. 101; 14 FAM; 6 FAM

## **3.0 Policy**

It is the policy of the Peace Corps to use the services of U.S. Government agencies to transport classified official materials for the Peace Corps. Non-classified official materials may be transported through the services of U.S. Government agencies or other mail servicers as described in this Manual Section. Parties connected to the Peace Corps may use the services of U.S. Government agencies or other mail servicers as described in this Manual Section.

Additional information on implementation of this policy is contained in the International Mail Procedures issued by the Office of Post Logistics and Support (PLS).

## **4.0 Definitions**

### **4.1 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.

### **4.2 Military Postal Service (MPS) (APO/FPO)**

An extension of the United States Postal Service (USPS) established to provide a means for the transportation, through military post offices, of official mail and material, personal mail to and from members of the U.S. Armed Forces, and other personnel and agencies as determined by the Department of Defense.

### **4.3 Diplomatic Post Office (DPO)**

Diplomatic post office is a postal facility operating out of a Department of State mission abroad as a branch post office of the USPS.

### **4.4 International Postal Service (Air Mail)**

Commercial mail service, such as FedEx or UPS, whose facilities may be used for transmitting unclassified official correspondence when:

- (a) It is financially or otherwise advantageous to the U.S. Government.

- (b) Pouch service is not available.
- (c) Material is unauthorized for pouch service.

#### **4.5 International Air Freight**

Commercial freight service operated by air transport firms, which is used for transmitting cold chain, perishable and bulk good items or goods requiring special handling provided that classified materials are not included.

#### **4.6 Expedited Mail Service**

Commercial mail services 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.

### **5.0 Diplomatic Pouch**

#### **5.1 Availability**

Through participation of the Peace Corps in the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services agreement, the Department of State's diplomatic pouch must be used as the primary mail system used between Peace Corps Headquarters and Posts. The Vienna Convention and international law limit the use of diplomatic pouches to correspondence and items for official use. Materials sent through the official pouch do not require postage.

#### **5.2 Volunteer Use**

Generally, Volunteers and Trainees (V/Ts) may not use the diplomatic pouch. However, the Peace Corps recognizes the lack of secure and efficient mail systems in some Peace Corps countries which cause problems for V/Ts in receiving checks, money orders, etc. The State Department diplomatic pouch may therefore be used by V/Ts for the shipment of the following items:

- (a) Items vital for health and welfare of V/Ts, e.g., prescription medicines and eyeglasses.
- (b) Legal or financial documents, such as checks and money orders.
- (c) Items and supplies required for ongoing or new Peace Corps programs and training projects, e.g., books, visual aids, and tools.

V/T may not use the diplomatic pouch for the mailing of personal mail, except when it is determined that mail service in specific countries is so ineffective that V/Ts are not receiving a significant portion of their personal mail. In such cases, the Director of the Peace Corps may authorize V/Ts to send letters through the pouch for a limited period.

#### **5.3 U.S. Citizen Permanent Staff Use**

U.S. permanent staff may use the Diplomatic Pouch for mailing and receiving personal mail to the same extent as other U.S. citizen members of the Foreign Service.

#### **5.4 Contractor, Host Country National, and Third Country National Use**

Contractors, host country nationals, and third country nationals may not use the Diplomatic Pouch for sending or receiving personal mail.

### **6.0 Military Postal Service (MPS)**

#### **6.1 Availability**

Peace Corps employees may use the MPS when approved by all of the following: the Country Director, Regional Director, and Postal Officer in country. Approving officials should weigh the effect of using the MPS on the Peace Corps in-country operations and approve its use only if use of such service is clearly necessary for maintaining personal communications with the United States.

#### **6.2 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 5.2.

#### **6.3 U.S. Citizen Permanent Staff Use**

U.S. citizen permanent overseas staff may use the MPS for sending and receiving personal mail.

#### **6.4 Contractor, Host Country National, and Third Country National Use**

Contractors, host country nationals, and third country national staff may not use MPS for sending or receiving personal mail.

### **7.0 Diplomatic Post Office (DPO)**

DPO service cannot be used for official mail. It can only be used to send personal mail and can be used by Peace Corps personnel and V/Ts for personal mail. Therefore, the Peace Corps Mail Center at Headquarters cannot send official mail through the DPO.

### **8.0 International Postal Service (Air Mail) and Air Freight Service**

International air mail and air freight may be used by any post for unclassified official mail. Posts that have access to the Diplomatic Pouch must examine the cost and time effectiveness of pouch service and international mail before choosing a system.

## **9.0 International Postal Service (Air Mail) and Air Freight Service from Overseas Posts to Peace Corps Headquarters**

### **9.1 Air Mail**

International air mail is regulated by the host country postal regulations; therefore, Peace Corps Posts that use the international postal system for unclassified official mail should consult local postal services about applicable regulations and restrictions.

### **9.2 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 a Government Bill of Lading.

### **10.0 Expedited Mail Service**

Unclassified materials shipped using expedited mail service must be properly packaged and sealed. Expedited mail services are the most expensive methods of shipment and should be used only when absolutely necessary or cost effective.

### **11.0 Effective Date**

The effective date is the date of issuance.