

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

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ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: All Officers concerned with the diplomatic pouches services of the United Nations

From: David B. Vaughan, Under-Secretary
Director of General Services

Subject: INSTRUCTIONS GOVERNING UNITED NATIONS DIPLOMATIC
POUCH SERVICE

1. The following instructions are issued for the guidance of staff members concerned, as certifying officers or as users, with the diplomatic pouch service at Headquarters and at United Nations offices away from Headquarters. Document ST/AI/124/Rev.1 of 24 November 1958 is superseded by the present instructions and by a separate memorandum on purely technical procedures which will be communicated to staff whom they directly concern.

Establishment of diplomatic pouch service

2. Under section 10 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, the United Nations has the right "to dispatch and receive its correspondence... in bags, which shall have the same immunities and privileges as diplomatic... bags". In virtue of the Convention and for the purpose of ensuring the security and speedy transmission of the official correspondence of the United Nations, a diplomatic pouch service has been established and is administered by the Communications, Archives and Records Service of the Office of General Services.

Restrictions on the contents of the diplomatic pouch

3. The following matter may be contained in the diplomatic pouch:

- (a) Official letters, memoranda, documents and printed matter;
- (b) Articles intended for official use appropriate for inclusion in the pouch;

(c) Urgently needed health supplies prescribed by a physician and certified by a United Nations medical officer for the use of United Nations staff members or their dependants, when the supplies are not obtainable locally and are requested in reasonable quantities;

(d) Personal letters to or from staff members in the field in the exceptional case where regular mail service is unavailable or inadequate; such letters from the field must bear the proper forwarding postage in uncanceled United Nations stamps if forwarding is required. Request for permission to include such personal mail shall be made by the field office concerned through the Chief of the Communications Archives and Records Service.

Diplomatic pouch service between field offices

4. Pouch service is not normally authorized between field offices away from Headquarters, but exceptions may be made in special circumstances - e.g., where there is a particular need for security, or where there is a substantial regular exchange of important mail matter, or for limited periods during a United Nations conference. Requests for the establishment of such service should be made to the Chief of the Communications, Archives and Records Service, indicating the probable volume and character of the mail, the frequency of consignments desired, the duration of the service, and the airline services by which it may be carried.

Certifying officers

5. The Chief of the Communications, Archives and Records Service may delegate his certifying authority by approving the appointment and registration of:

- (a) Diplomatic mail certifying officers and alternates, and
- (b) Officers authorized to transmit sealed and confidential correspondence through the diplomatic mail service.

This authority is delegated on Form P.86, a copy of which, bearing the signature of the authorized official, is kept on file at Headquarters.

6. Diplomatic mail-certifying officers are responsible for certifying material for shipment by diplomatic pouch. They are responsible for all pouch operations, including preparing, sealing, and shipping outgoing pouches and receiving, opening and verifying the contents of incoming pouches. So far as practicable, certifying officers will be selected from staff in grades P-3 and above. Alternate certifying officers may act in the absence of the regular certifying officers.

Preparation of material for pouch

7. All mail intended for dispatch by diplomatic pouch shall be delivered unsealed to the certifying officer, with the exception of sealed mail certified as provided in paragraph 8 below, and private letter mail sent by pouch as provided by paragraph 3 (d) above. Items of diplomatic mail not falling within the regulations for dispatch will be corrected by the certifying officer or, where this is not possible, returned to the sender.

8. United Nations officers authorized to transmit sealed and confidential correspondence through the diplomatic pouch service, as provided in paragraph 5 (b) above, are: all officers of the level of Director and above; all diplomatic pouch certifying officers; the senior officer present in any field office; and certain other senior officials expressly designated. The signature of such an authorized officer on a sealed envelope constitutes his certification that its contents concern the official business of the United Nations and are in accordance with the diplomatic pouch regulations. Such envelopes may be marked "confidential" or "personal attention" but should not be marked "personal" or "private".

Violations

9. Violation of the diplomatic mail privileges of the United Nations may have serious consequences, and officials to whom authority to certify or transmit diplomatic mail has been delegated will be held accountable for any violations of the regulations under the authority delegated to them.
