

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

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29 September 1981

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: All offices concerned with the diplomatic pouch service

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for General Services

Subject: INSTRUCTIONS GOVERNING UNITED NATIONS DIPLOMATIC
POUCH SERVICE

1. The following instructions are issued for the guidance of certifying officers and users of the diplomatic pouch service at Headquarters and at United Nations offices away from Headquarters. Attention is particularly drawn to paragraph 5 which requests field offices away from Headquarters to carefully consider the introduction of diplomatic pouch service between field offices away from Headquarters rather than routing the material through New York. In many instances such service would not only save time but would reduce an unnecessary volume of work at Headquarters.

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, a diplomatic pouch service has been established to ensure the security and speedy transmission of the official correspondence of the United Nations. The service is administered by the Communications Service of the Office of General Services.

Restrictions on the contents of the diplomatic pouch

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

(a) Official letters, memoranda, documents and printed matter of which individual packages must not exceed 35 pounds or 16 kilograms;

(b) Articles intended for official use appropriate for inclusion in the pouch, where shipment by other means is not feasible;

(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, parcels and periodicals to or from staff members in the field are not permitted in the pouch. Only in exceptional circumstances, where regular mail service is unavailable or inadequate, may such letters or small parcels be accepted from staff in the field. In such cases the items must bear the proper postage in uncanceled United Nations stamps if postal forwarding by Headquarters is required. Request for permission to include such personal mail shall be made by the field office concerned to the Chief of the Communications Service. It is the responsibility of the field office to notify Headquarters when pouch service for personal letters is no longer required. At no time will bulk-rate mail be forwarded to staff in the field.

4. In view of escalating costs, every effort must be made by Pouch Certifying Officers to limit the weight and quantity of material transmitted by pouch in order to keep expenditures within a reasonable level. Regular review of material dispatched via pouch is required for this purpose.

Diplomatic pouch service between field offices

5. Direct pouch service between field offices away from Headquarters should be established on a continuous or ad hoc basis where the volume of material meets the minimum pouch weight requirements of airline carriers. Direct pouch service can only be established after obtaining the concurrence of the national governments concerned. Field offices are requested to report to the Chief of the Communications Service on a post facto basis of the establishment of new direct pouch routes.

Preparation of material for pouch

6. All mail intended for dispatch by diplomatic pouch shall be delivered unsealed to the Pouch Certifying Officer, with the exception of sealed mail certified as provided in paragraph 8 below and private letter mail sent by pouch as provided in paragraph 3 (d) above. Items of mail not falling within the regulation for dispatch will be returned to the sender.

Certifying officers

7. The Chief of the Communications Service will delegate pouch certifying authority by approving the appointment and registration of:

(a) Diplomatic Pouch Certifying Officers and alternates who are authorized to seal and transmit official United Nations diplomatic pouch bags and/or confidential sealed items transmitted via pouch.

(b) Officials who are authorized to transmit confidential sealed correspondence through the diplomatic pouch 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.

8. Diplomatic pouch certifying officers are responsible for certifying material for shipment by diplomatic pouch. They are responsible for all United Nations 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.

9. The signature on a sealed envelope of a United Nations officer authorized to transmit sealed and confidential correspondence through the diplomatic pouch constitutes certification that the contents concern the official business of the United Nations and are in accordance with diplomatic pouch regulations.

Violations

10. Officials to whom authority to certify or transmit mail has been delegated are accountable for any violations of the regulations under the authority delegated to them. Regular spot checks will be made of the contents of pouches, packages or envelopes by the Diplomatic Pouch Unit at Headquarters, but it should be emphasized that such checks are not intended to relieve any authorized officials of their responsibilities hereunder.

11. The present instructions supersede those contained in ST/AI/174/Rev. 1 of 10 July 1978.
