

ST/AI/124  
22 May 1957

## ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: All Officers Responsible for the Diplomatic Pouch  
Services of the United Nations

Subject: INSTRUCTIONS GOVERNING UNITED NATIONS DIPLOMATIC MAILS AND  
THE DIPLOMATIC POUCH SERVICE

1. The following revised instructions are issued for the guidance of all officers responsible for supervision and control of United Nations diplomatic mails and the diplomatic pouch services. ST/AI/103, ST/AI/103/Amend.1, as well as the instructions of 13 August 1951, are hereby superseded.
2. Diplomatic mail privileges accorded to the United Nations. The granting of diplomatic mail privileges to the United Nations by Governments is a "courtesy of trust". Conveyance of the privilege does not necessarily depend upon whether a particular Government has ratified the Convention on Privileges and Immunities, and there has seldom occurred any hesitancy on the part of a Government to grant diplomatic mail privileges to the United Nations when requested to do so by the Secretary-General.

(a) DIPLOMATIC MAILS

Diplomatic mails are considered to include only mail matter related to the official business of the Administration to which the privilege is accorded ... in this case, the United Nations. In addition to official letter mail and printed matter, therefore, supply items, samples, and similar parcels normally classed as "dutable merchandise" may be admitted as diplomatic mail only when they are the property of and are sent exclusively in connexion with business of the United Nations (except explosives, combustibles and similar materials forbidden to be transported on commercial aircraft).

In exceptional cases the Secretary-General may declare it the official business of the United Nations to forward private mail on behalf of staff members assigned to missions under circumstances of hardship where regular mail services are interrupted, suspended, or disorganized. Such authority shall normally be made only in the interests of the Organization and shall apply exclusively to letters that are mailed through postal channels and to health supplies, eye glasses or medicines for staff members upon prescription or certification of a medical officer. These items must be addressed to the staff member "care of" the United Nations, Box 20, Grant Central Post Office, New York 17, New York. Mail from staff members in these specially designated areas should bear the proper forwarding postage. This authority does not allow the forwarding of parcels and packages of a private nature containing dutiable merchandise, articles or substance.

It is clearly the intent of postal and customs laws that the diplomatic mail privileges are not to be employed for transmission of dutiable personal property nor for the evasion of postage on private mails.

(b) VIOLATION OF DIPLOMATIC MAIL PRIVILEGES

A violation of diplomatic mail privileges accorded the United Nations may result in rescission of the privilege by a plaintiff Government.

(c) OVER-ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DIPLOMATIC MAILS AND DIPLOMATIC SERVICES

The Chief of Registry at Headquarters is responsible for the diplomatic mail operations and for compliance with regulations governing classification and transit of those mails.

3. Appointment of diplomatic mail certifying officers and officers authorized to transmit sealed and confidential mail matter over their personal signatures.

There exist two distinct delegations in connexion with diplomatic mail services at Headquarters and in field offices, missions and commissions (referred to hereafter as "field offices"). These are:

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- (i) To diplomatic mail certifying officers who are authorized to transmit pouches and are responsible for certifying, manifesting for shipment, actual shipment and receipt of sealed diplomatic pouches and,
  - (ii) To officers on the diplomatic mail list at Headquarters and field who are authorized to transmit individually, mail deemed to be so confidential as to require sealing before delivery to the Pouch Officer over their personal signatures (as certifications) on the mail covers.
- (a) APPOINTMENT OF CERTIFYING OFFICERS FOR DIPLOMATIC POUCH SERVICE
- (i) The Director of General Services or the Chief of Communications and Records Service is responsible for appointment and registration of all certifying officers for diplomatic pouch services at Headquarters and field offices. Alternate certifying officers shall be appointed and registered to act in the absence of regular certifying officers.
  - (ii) In all cases, signature cards giving name and title of the certifying officer and alternates will be placed on file with the Chief of Registry.
  - (iii) By reason of responsibilities conveyed in the assignment of diplomatic mail certifying officers and alternates, they shall so far as practicable be selected in grades P-3 and above.
  - (iv) Diplomatic mail (pouch) certifying officers carry the full responsibility to assure that the contents of diplomatic mails are restricted to the official business of the United Nations. If a violation of diplomatic mail privileges should be reported, the responsible pouch certifying officer will be held accountable.
- (b) DELEGATION OF OFFICERS TO THE "DIPLOMATIC MAILING LIST"
- (i) At Headquarters and within the principal field offices, it may be necessary to require certain confidential correspondence to

be sealed before turning over to the diplomatic mail certifying officers for transmission by the Communications and Records Service. While all official field office mail of the United Nations goes by diplomatic pouch, previously sealed matter is admissible only when it carries personal certification by one of the officials so authorized. The personal signature of an official so designated together with a "confidential" marking on the cover shall constitute certification that the contents of such sealed mail concerns the official business of the United Nations. Sealed mail should not be marked "personal" or "private" but may be marked "personal attention" or "private attention" of the addressee in addition to a security classification on the cover.

- (ii) Officers authorized to seal and submit correspondence over their own certifications are in no sense relieved of personal responsibility for compliance with the regulations and the diplomatic mail certifying officer should, when appropriate, refer officials to these responsibilities.
- (iii) The following officers shall be authorized to certify sealed, confidential mail for transmission by diplomatic pouch:
  - (a) Officers of the level of director and above.
  - (b) The senior officer present in field offices or liaison activities associated with field offices where staff of director's rank or its equivalent are not assigned.
  - (c) Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.
  - (d) Secretary of the Appointment and Promotion Board.
  - (e) Secretary of the Joint Staff Pension Fund.
  - (f) Executive Secretary of the Administrative Tribunal.
  - (g) Chairman of the Staff Committee.
  - (h) Senior Liaison Officers of special programmes, independent boards and missions, and the senior officer present at liaison offices of specialized agencies sharing in the United Nations diplomatic pouch service.
  - (i) Officers responsible for the diplomatic mails.

(iv) Alternate delegations may be made by the Director of the Office of General Services or the Chief of Communications and Records Service for an officer in the extended absence of the principal authorizing officer, or because of other special circumstances. All alternate delegations shall be made on a temporary basis for a specified period or for a particular purpose.

(v) Pursuant to this instruction, the Office of General Services, in consultation with the departments at Headquarters and with offices away from Headquarters, will initiate Forms P.86 to designate officers eligible under this instruction. The forms will be signed by the Director, Office of General Services or the Chief of the Communications and Records Service.

4. Diplomatic pouch procedures. Diplomatic pouch operations, including the making up and manifesting of contents of pouches for dispatch, certification of contents and the affixing of seals at the point of dispatch, receiving, opening and verification of contents at the point of receipt shall be direct responsibilities of the respective Pouch Certifying Officers.

(a) PREPARATION AND DISPATCH OF POUCH MAILS

All mail entered for transmission via the Diplomatic Pouch Service shall be delivered open to the pouch certifying officer except sealed mail items containing personal certification (signature on mail cover) of an officer on the diplomatic mailing list.

The following routine shall be observed in the actual preparation of pouches:

- (i) Items of diplomatic mail not prepared in accordance with instructions shall be revised and corrected on the spot or shall be returned to the office of origin for correction.
- (ii) All listed mail items for each shipment to a common destination shall be numbered in red ink or red pencil consecutively, beginning with number 1.
- (iii) All mail items shall be listed in numerical order by item numbers on form CR.32(7-53), "Summary of Enclosures", in triplicate. Each item shall be fully described on the Summary of Enclosures (referred to herein also as "Manifest") as to addressee, subject,

and/or attachments and enclosures in such a way as to afford ready identification. (Note: in case of lost or destroyed pouches, properly completed summaries of enclosures are the only record by which lost mail may be accounted for and duplicated.)

The original and copies of the manifest shall, after completion, be dated and certified by the responsible officer; the original and duplicate manifests, addressed to the responsible officer at destination, shall constitute the invoice of contents and be enclosed in the pouch.

The triplicate copy of the manifest shall be retained by the responsible dispatching officer pending return of the receipted original.

In offices handling large volumes of pouch enclosures, an abridged listing is permissible in emergencies. In this type of listing only important communications and enclosures such as sealed, confidential letters and valuable documents, articles and correspondence need be numbered and described on the Summary of Enclosures. All listed correspondence together with the Summary of Enclosures will be placed in a single envelope marked "Recorded Correspondence". Communications not listed will be enclosed in one envelope which will be numbered and entered as one item described as "General Correspondence". A pouch containing only documents or non-valuable material other than correspondence can be declared on the Summary as "No Items for Listing".

- (iv) If more than one pouch is required for a single shipment, separate manifests shall be prepared for each. Manifests are distinguishable by the pouch number.
- (v) All "open" letter mail shall be consolidated into single envelopes (or covers) to conserve space and weight.

Each letter or memorandum and attachments sent under consolidated mail cover shall be listed and identified separately on the manifest under a single item number described as "INTEROFFICE LETTER MAIL".



Pouch dispatch notices should not be sent until after confirmation of departure of the flight transporting the pouch has been given by the airline agent.

Cabled notices of pouch dispatches shall not include the name of the airline once a common carrier has been selected. However, if a shipment is made by an airline other than the common carrier between points, the name of the new carrier (using initials only) shall be included in the dispatch notice.

(b) RECEIPT AND PROCESSING OF POUCH MAILS

Certifying officers at points of receipt of diplomatic pouches shall be responsible for receiving, opening, verifying and certifying the actual receipt of contents.

- (i) All pouches received shall be inspected at the airport prior to acceptance to see that the seals and contents are intact. Evidence that a pouch seal has been broken or that a pouch has been opened shall be reported immediately to the carrier agent at the airport and to the Chief of the Communications and Records Service at Headquarters for investigation. Such reports to Headquarters should show the pouch number, whether any enclosures are missing and any pertinent information as to circumstances under which the opening or breaking of the seal occurred.
- (ii) Arrangements shall be made for the prompt collection of pouches from air-terminals and for the expeditious processing of contents at offices of destination.
- (iii) Manifests shall be promptly verified against contents of the pouch, item by item, and signed by the responsible officer for return in the next pouch to the sending office.
- (iv) The responsible officer in the receiving office shall report immediately to the dispatching office any missing enclosures.
- (v) Cabled reports on pouch arrivals shall not be required unless specifically requested by the sending office (important enclosures, transit tests, etc.) or in the case of unusual and prolonged



delay in the arrival of a pouch. In the latter instance, the receiving office should institute tracer with the airline agent if possible, otherwise the sending office will be obliged to trace the shipment.

5. Establishment of diplomatic pouch services between field offices. Normally, considering minimum charges and minimum weight regulations, the volume of mail to be exchanged between field offices is not sufficient to require the establishment of a scheduled pouch service. However, considerations involving security and the regular exchange of important mail matter may outweigh the other considerations.

(a) The Director of General Services or the Chief of Communications and Records Service at Headquarters may authorize and arrange for the establishment of diplomatic pouch services between field offices under exceptional circumstances, or during important meetings, upon application by the Administrative Officer or the Head of the field office requiring the service. Such applications shall describe the volume and character of the mail, state the frequency of pouch shipments and airline schedules point-to-point and probable duration of the service. Copies of such applications shall be forwarded to any other field offices concerned.

6. Acquisition, exchange and use of pouch supplies. Pouches, seals, tags and labels and other materials necessary for operating the diplomatic pouch service in field offices are supplied by the Register at Headquarters.

(a) INITIAL POUCH SUPPLIES

The initial supply will be accompanied with instructions for sealing, labelling and other details to be followed in the preparation of pouches for shipment.

(b) ADDITIONAL POUCH SUPPLIES

Additional pouch supplies may be obtained from the Registry at Headquarters upon request. Requests for replenishment of supplies should be submitted sufficiently in advance of exhaustion of those on hand to permit shipment by ordinary parcel post or as first class mail.

(c) RETURN OF POUCHES ACCUMULATING IN FIELD OFFICES

Since frequency of pouch dispatches from Headquarters may be greater than return shipments from a field office, periodic accumulations of unused pouches should be returned to Headquarters by one of the following services:

- (i) Pouches may be returned by ordinary parcel post.
- (ii) Light weight pouches may be returned by diplomatic pouch provided the extra weight will not increase costs of the pouch by more than the cost of return by parcel post.

(Signed) M.B. VAUGHAN

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