

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DISPATCH OF OFFICIAL MAIL

Procedure

1. The following instructions detail the procedure for the preparation and dispatch of all official mail within the Royal Air Force. These instructions should be read in conjunction with JSP101, AP 3086 (RAF Manual of Security), AP 3184 (RAF Manual of Office Management) and any local security regulations. Guidance on postal administration and the working of RAF post offices and post rooms is contained in AP 1978 (RAF Manual of the RAF Postal Service).

Civil Postal Regulations

2. The limitations of weight, size and contents of official mail are to conform to Post Office regulations in the United Kingdom and, in other areas, to the instructions of the local postal or other accepting authority.

Use of "Official Paid" Stationery

3. The regulations for the use of "official paid" stationery are contained in pages 2 to 5 of this publication.

Registration

4. The cost of registration is high, and this service should only be used where it is essential to obtain the special type of physical security it affords. Normally, official mail is to be registered for dispatch only if:

- (a) It contains a classified document for which the security protection afforded by registration is necessary and authorised (Reference AP 3086, Chapter 4, Annex A).
- (b) It contains Valuable and/or Attractive equipment.
- (c) It is essential to trace the item in event of loss or delay; this is normally applicable only to original historical and legal documents (for example, wills, land and property deeds). It does not apply to replaceable documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates; passports; insurance policies; RAF passes, permits and identity documents, etc., which should be sent by ordinary letter post or recorded delivery service, as appropriate.

Recorded Delivery Service

5. The recorded delivery service gives no greater degree of physical security than ordinary letter post and it should therefore be used only when:

- (a) Proof of delivery is necessary.
 - (b) Dispatching a document at present required by Statute to be served in this manner. The recorded delivery service now provides a legal alternative to registration for this purpose.
6. The recorded delivery service should not be used for:
- (a) Mail between Service and/or Government formations and personnel, particularly when service receipt forms such as MOD Form 24 are used.
 - (b) Those items of official mail which require registration under the provisions of para 4.

Parcel Compensation Fee

7. Where the content of a package should be insured for compensation in the event of loss, the Post Office Parcel Compensation Fee scheme is available. When used the package goes by First Class post. Maximum compensation is £200.

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Form 1786 [Dispatch/Receipt List—RAF Mail]

8. Forms 1786 are to be prepared for all registered items, in accordance with the instructions contained in AP 1978.

ACTION BY FORMATIONS AND UNITS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Dispatch by UK Locations to Addresses in the United Kingdom and to Northern Ireland

9. Correspondence, etc., for dispatch to destinations in the United Kingdom is to be placed in an envelope or cover marked with the full postal address of the addressee. Preparation and dispatch details are given in AP 3086, but note that Unclassified and In Confidence is to be treated as for Restricted material. Where the postal address of a MOD department in the London area is not known the correspondence is to be enveloped, marked to the branch concerned and placed in an outer omnibus envelope addressed to MOD CS(M)2, St Giles Court, 1-13 St Giles High Street, London, WC2H 8LD for onward transmission. No outer envelope enclosed within the omnibus envelope is to carry a security grading.

Dispatch by UK Locations to Addresses Abroad

10. (a) Correspondence classified Confidential and Secret is to be enclosed in a new plain envelope marked with the full postal address of the destination abroad. The mail is then to be placed in an omnibus envelope or cover bearing an "official paid" imprint (but see page 8, para. 20 for weight limitations) and addressed as follows:—

(i) *Diplomatic Service:*

MOD CS(M)2 Overseas Section,
Room 0301,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2HB.

(ii) *Forces Courier Terminal:*

MOD CS(M)2,
BFPO 1000.

(b) Unclassified and Restricted mail which is for routing through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Diplomatic Bag Service to countries listed in AP 3086, Chapter 4, Annex A, Note 9, is to be similarly enveloped and addressed and forwarded to MOD CS(M)2 (Overseas).

(c) Unclassified and Restricted mail to British Forces Post Office addresses is to be addressed to the final addressee and dispatched in Official Paid envelopes direct through normal Post Office channels.

(d) Unclassified and Restricted letter mail for addresses other than those referred to in sub-para (b) and (c) is to have postage stamps affixed and dispatched direct through normal Post Office channels.

11. The omnibus envelope or cover referred to in para. 10(a) and (b) is to contain either:—

(a) Secret and/or Confidential mail (see para. 4(a) concerning registration) or

(b) Restricted, Staff/Medical in confidence unclassified mail.

12. Unclassified parcels are to be made up to conform to the regulations contained in the *Post Office Guide* in weight, size and contents. They are to be accurately weighed and the correct value in postage stamps affixed to each parcel according to its destination. Parcels are to be dispatched at the rate which entails the least possible cost in postage (*i.e.* either at letter or parcel post rate). Completed customs declaration forms are to be attached. The parcels are to be fully addressed to the destinations abroad and dispatched direct through normal Post Office channels. "Official paid" labels are not to be used.

13. Classified parcels are to be forwarded to MOD CS(M)2 (Overseas) (as shown at para. 10(a)) in accordance with AP 3086, Chapter 4.

Customs Declaration Forms

14. The type of customs declaration to be affixed to official parcels is given below:—

(a) Entitled units who dispatch items at parcel post rates to BFPO addresses only are to use Form F.PKG 187.

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Note:—Entitled units are those that normally dispatch abroad more than 50 parcels each month. F.PKG 187 is to be accorded the same security protection as “official paid” labels and is to be signed by a commissioned officer or civilian equivalent.

(b) Non-entitled units who dispatch items at parcel post rates to BFPO addresses are to use Post Office Form PP 31B, completed in detail.

(c) All units who dispatch items at parcel post rates to other than BFPO addresses are to use the civilian type of customs declaration and where necessary a dispatch note.

Note:—Full details regarding the use of civilian types of customs declaration are contained in the *Post Office Guide*.

(d) Entitled units who dispatch items at letter rates to BFPO addresses only, are to use Form F.PKG 187.

(e) Non-entitled units who dispatch items at letter rates to BFPO addresses and all units who dispatch items at letter rates to other than BFPO addresses, are to use the Green customs label referred to in the *Post Office Guide*.

Identification of Dispatching Unit

15. Particulars of the dispatching unit are to be shown at the bottom left-hand corner of all envelopes and covers. If dispatch by air is required the words “By Air Mail” are to be shown on the outer cover when appropriate.

Precedence Markings

16. Envelopes and covers are to be marked with the highest degree of precedence of the mail contained therein.

ACTION BY FORMATIONS AND UNITS ABROAD

Dispatch to Addresses outside the Local Area

17. The procedure to be adopted abroad for the dispatch of mail is to conform, as far as possible, to that for the United Kingdom, except that stationery bearing the “Official Paid” design is not to be used. All mail intended for the Ministry of Defence, and top secret, secret and confidential mail for units in the United Kingdom is to be forwarded to the MOD CS(M)2, St Giles Court, 1-13 St Giles High Street, London, WC2H 8LD. Mail graded staff in confidence, medical in confidence, restricted and unclassified is to be addressed direct to the final destination in the United Kingdom and forwarded via:—

(a) Forces post offices where Forces Postal Services are operating.

(b) Civil post offices elsewhere unless instructions to the contrary have been issued.

18. Local arrangements are to be made for mail intended for destinations outside the area of command to be forwarded in an omnibus envelope or cover to the local area special dispatch office or other clearing office responsible. Mail graded “secret” or “confidential” may be enclosed in the same outer cover. “Staff/Medical in confidence”, “restricted” and “unclassified” mail may also be enclosed together but such items are not to be included with mail of a higher security grading. AP 3086 (RAF Manual of Security) details the action necessary for dispatch, through a clearing office, to destinations outside the local area abroad.

Dispatch to Addresses within the Local Area

19. AP 3086 gives details of the procedure to be adopted for the dispatch of mail within local areas.

Dispatching Unit

20. Particulars of the dispatching unit are to be shown at the bottom left-hand corner of all envelopes and covers. If mail is dispatched by air the words “By Air Mail” are to be shown on the outer cover.

Precedence Markings

21. Where a precedence above routine is necessary the outer cover is to be annotated accordingly (see JSP 101 para. 270).

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CHANNELS OF DISPATCH

Post Office Channels

22. (a) *United Kingdom.* Mail up to and including confidential is to be dispatched by ordinary post unless, for security reasons, the originator considers dispatch by registered post essential. Mail classified secret dispatched through Post Office channels is, without exception, to be registered. The first class service, in which priority treatment is given, is to be used sparingly and at the discretion of officers originating correspondence. The second class service is to be used for all purposes, except where there is a clear and defensible need for the quicker, and more costly, first class service. Mail for dispatch is to be sorted into first class and second class prior to collection by, or delivery to, the Post Office.

(b) *Abroad.* Unclassified and restricted mail (including staff/medical in confidence) is to be dispatched as follows:

(i) *To countries listed in AP 3086, chapter 4, Annex A, Note 9.* Via the Diplomatic Bag through MOD CS(M)2, Room 0301 Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB.

(ii) *To all other countries.* Direct through normal FPO channels or civil Post Offices.

Diplomatic Bag

23. The Foreign and Commonwealth Diplomatic Bag Service should only be used for destinations which are not served by the Forces Courier Communications Service. The Diplomatic Bag is for mail of the security grade confidential and above, whether it bears a precedence or not. Mail for conveyance by this service is to be dispatched through an agency of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, e.g. a British embassy, legation or consular office.

Courier Service (UK)

24. This service operates throughout the United Kingdom for the carriage of top secret correspondence. Items intended for this service should be delivered to MOD CS(M)2, Room 0301 Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB, or to any command headquarters for onward transmission to Ministry of Defence, CS(M)2.

Forces Courier Communications Service

25. This service is operated by the Forces Courier and Communications Service, a part of the Forces Postal Service operated by the Army and may be used for the carriage of classified mail between the United Kingdom and Army/RAF units abroad. Forces Courier offices are established at most of the major units abroad and in addition to a courier service it does provide for the safe handling of classified mail at points of arrival and departure. Classified mail for dispatch via the Forces Courier service is to be prepared in accordance with the instructions laid down by the Forces Postal Services. These instructions should be obtained from a Forces Courier office.

RAF Aircraft

26. All classified mail is to be accompanied by a responsible courier. It may be sent by hand of pilot as a last resort and the dispatching authority must then ensure in advance that suitable arrangements are made for receiving it at the airport of arrival.

Civil Aircraft

27. Confidential mail only may be dispatched by safe hand of civil pilot provided the conditions of para 26 have been met and certain security factors satisfied (i.e. the nationality of the airline, the route and destination of the aircraft). Mail is only to be carried by airlines which have been officially approved for this purpose by Ministry of Defence.

Casual Courier

28. A casual courier may be used to carry classified mail when no other safe channel of dispatch is available. Only officers and security-cleared senior NCOs are to be employed on this duty. Written instructions regarding his duties are to be issued to the courier before each journey commences.

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Admiralty Bag

29. This bag service is only for routine mail of the security grade "secret" from ports where such facilities exist. When a bag is dispatched through a Naval Fleet mails or other office for transmission by this service to the United Kingdom the label is to be endorsed "Admiralty Bag" and addressed to:—

Ministry of Defence,

(via Head Postmaster of the first port of call in the United Kingdom).

When a bag has been dispatched, a "priority" letter is to be sent to:—

MOD CS(M)2,

Overseas Section,

Room 0301,

Main Building,

Whitehall,

London SW1A 2HB.

giving the date of dispatch, the name of the vessel and the first port of call in the United Kingdom.

POSTAL ADDRESSES

United Kingdom

30. The envelope or cover, enclosing official correspondence, which is sent through the post to Royal Air Force formations and units in the United Kingdom, is to show the full postal address. Normally, this address is made up as follows:—

- (a) Designation of the Commander.
- (b) Title of the unit.
- (c) The words "Royal Air Force".
- (d) The location as shown in bold type in column (1) of the Index of Stations (pages 31 to 84).
- (e) The postal address shown in column 2 of the Index of Stations.

Example:—

Officer Commanding,

No. 14 Maintenance Unit,

Royal Air Force,

Carlisle,

Cumbria, CA6 4DB.

Abroad

31. The address of RAF formations and units abroad is to be made up (in a similar manner to that shown in para 30), from the Index of Stations Abroad (pages 85 to 90) but see instructions on page 85 regarding the addresses of operational units abroad.