INTRODUCTION

As part of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) administers a variety of programs involving the foreign diplomatic community in the United States. This diplomatic community includes diplomats, consular personnel, administrative and technical staff, and their family members.

OFM works with the Office of the Chief of Protocol, which determines eligibility for diplomatic immunities and privileges, to serve the international community and protect Americans who share the road with our diplomatic community.

OFM’s most visible program is the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle program, which includes the registration of all diplomatic vehicles — whether official or personal — in the United States, as well as the issuance of U.S. Department of State diplomatic license plates and driver’s licenses.

Administered in accordance with U.S. laws and international law and treaties, this nationwide program regulates the acquisition, registration, and disposition of all motor vehicles belonging to foreign missions and their members.

The program:
- Verifies that mandated insurance standards are maintained
- Ensures that members of the foreign diplomatic community and their families who operate a motor vehicle in the United States are issued U.S. Department of State driver’s licenses
- Monitors driving records to ensure unsafe drivers are removed from the road.

OFM ensures that diplomatic benefits, privileges, and immunities are properly exercised in accordance with U.S. and international laws. Although holders of U.S. Department of State-issued driver’s licenses may enjoy various diplomatic privileges and immunities, such individuals are nevertheless obliged under international treaties to respect local law – they are not beyond the reach of the law!

This brochure offers a brief overview of four key aspects of the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle program:
- Driver’s Licenses
- Vehicle License Plates and Registration
- Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges
- Contact Information.

For more information about the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle program or diplomatic privileges and immunities in general, contact one of the OFM or Diplomatic Security offices listed in the “Contact Information” section, or visit the OFM Web site at www.state.gov/ofm.
The diplomatic driver’s license background is light blue; lettering is black; a kinegram, which includes multiple layers of security and features an American flag, and ocean and mountain scenes, is embedded above the driver’s photo on the front of the card; and an image of the interior of the Lincoln Memorial is printed in the background on the right front side.

Law enforcement agencies may obtain training materials on the security features by contacting the Office of Foreign Mission’s Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office at OfmDmvEnforcement@state.gov or the Department’s Diplomatic Security Protective Liaison Office at (202) 895-3600. The card design was updated in 2011. Previous versions appear significantly different and are no longer valid.

State and local law enforcement agencies should note that holders of Department of State driver’s licenses:

- Are subject to the issuance of traffic citations
- May be entitled to diplomatic immunity
- May be unfamiliar with American customs and the English language
- May be unfamiliar with local driving practices

The U.S. Department of State routinely informs all foreign diplomatic missions that the operation of a motor vehicle in the United States by persons enjoying diplomatic privileges and immunities is a privilege that may be withdrawn in cases of abuse.
VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES AND REGISTRATION

OFM’s Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office regulates the acquisition, registration, and disposition of all motor vehicles belonging to foreign missions and their members.

All vehicles owned or operated by the diplomatic community must be registered with the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office. The registration card indicates the name(s) of the registered owner(s).

Registration cards cannot be used to transfer ownership. Titles are not provided upon registration but are issued at the time of a vehicle’s disposition.

Vehicles registered with OFM must display U.S. Department of State-issued license plates at their front and rear. Adhesive decals indicating the expiration month and year of the registration must be affixed to the rear license plate of each vehicle.

Department of State license plates are U.S. Government property and must be returned to OFM upon termination of mission duties or upon demand by the U.S. Department of State. Lost or stolen plates must be reported immediately to OFM’s Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office at (202) 895-3521, or after hours to (571) 345-3146, or toll-free to (866) 217-2089.

The Office of Foreign Missions issues license plates with three alpha and four numeric digits on a blue background with a red banner. The current plate design and formats are pictured on the right.

License plates with one letter and six numbers are issued to members of the Secretariats of the Organization of American States and United Nations.

Vehicles with diplomatic license plates:
- Must be covered by liability insurance
- Are not generally subject to inspection
- May not be sold or exported without the approval of the U.S. Department of State.

NOTE: State and local law enforcement personnel may verify U.S. Department of State driver’s licenses and vehicle registrations through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) (state code ORI is “US”).
When cited for traffic violations, members of foreign diplomatic missions and their dependents must take the appropriate steps to resolve each offense.

Failure to properly address a violation may have significant consequences for the holder of a diplomatic driver’s license, including:

- Loss of driving privileges
- Fines

When OFM’s Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office is notified that a member of the diplomatic and/or consular communities has been cited for a traffic offense, OFM will notify the alleged offender’s diplomatic mission and advise that office on the appropriate means of resolving the case.

The U.S. Department of State will NOT intervene with local jurisdictions to contest traffic citations, nor does it have the authority to dismiss such violations or cancel their associated fines.

During a traffic stop or vehicle incident, law enforcement should contact the Office of Foreign Missions at (202) 895-3500 or via email at OFMDMVInfo@state.gov. For general questions about OFM vehicle registrations, driver’s licenses, or diplomatic or consular privileges and immunities, please contact the nearest OFM regional office or the closest Diplomatic Security field office. See the Contact Information section of this brochure for a list of offices and phone numbers.