

Section 4– Duty-Free Customs Entry Program

Members of foreign diplomatic missions, consular offices, and government organizations, personnel of public international organizations, and foreign military personnel enjoy certain free importation privileges provided by multilateral and bilateral treaties, statutes, and agreements.

While administrative and technical staff members of embassies and consulates enjoy only first-installation privileges under provisions of the Vienna Conventions, more extensive privileges may be extended on a reciprocal basis, or in accordance with bilateral treaty provisions or agreements.

The U.S. Customs Regulations and Harmonized Tariff Schedules provide domestic authority for the extension of customs duty-free entry privileges to the categories of persons indicated above as well as for the duty-free entry of official shipments owned by the foreign government concerned. These importation privileges extend to all articles not prohibited by law; among the items denied entry into the U.S. are certain plant and animal products, articles of Cuban origin, flora and fauna protected by the Endangered Species Act, and controlled drugs.

The Office of Foreign Missions Customs Program (OFM/Customs) coordinates the clearance of such articles with the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) for the personal and family use of entitled individuals, as well as for the official use of diplomatic missions, consulates, and international organizations. That is, the Department of State grants approval of the items and BCBP authorizes their release.

OFM/Customs also arranges the blanket duty-free entry of foreign-government-owned equipment being imported for repair and return, or in conjunction with joint projects being carried out by the foreign government and a U.S. Government entity not in connection with a Foreign Military Sale case.

The Bureau of Ocean and International Environmental Scientific Affairs, Office of Marine Science and Technology Affairs Division (OES/OA/MST) arranges for the diplomatic clearance of foreign-government-owned research vessels making informal or routine calls at U.S. ports and/or trust territories. Procedures for these customs-related functions are

provided in Section 6.

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of International Security and Peacekeeping Operations (PM/ISP) arranges for naval diplomatic clearance of foreign government-owned naval vessels. Procedures for these customs-related functions are provided in Section 6. Pursuant to international law, diplomatic and consular shipments are generally exempt from inspection unless there are serious grounds for presuming that such a shipment may contain articles not entitled to exemption, prohibited by law from import or export, or controlled by the quarantine regulations of the United States. Any inspection may be conducted only in the presence of the diplomatic agent or consular officer or an authorized representative.

4.1 Requests for Clearance of Shipments

** hyperlink to interactive form DS-1504 is available on p 4-24*

All requests for the clearance of shipments, whether for the personal use of a privileged individual or for official use, must be submitted to OFM/Customs on form DS-1504 (Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise).^{*} No other means (e.g., Customs Form 3299) may be used to gain entry.

Consular posts may submit forms DS-1504 (Request for Customs Clearance) through the OFM regional offices which provide service in their areas of responsibility or through their respective embassies for processing. Entitled personnel of international organizations (United Nations, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Monetary Fund, etc.) should submit their forms through their own administrative offices which will forward them to the appropriate OFM office for processing.

A separate form must be completed for each individual shipment or, in the case of items being withdrawn from a customs-bonded warehouse, for each supplier. Each DS-1504 consists of six multi-colored copies and information must be typed on the form. (Form DS-1504 is also available on-line at www.state.gov/ofm.) When the form is completed, each mission, consulate, or international organization should detach the pink customer (or in some cases, blue diplomatic) copy for its files and send the original and all other copies to OFM/Customs, allowing at least 10 working days to process all requests. Inquiries will not be accepted until 6 working days after the DS-1504 was received at OFM.

The submitting mission is required to provide all information needed to clear each shipment. (Please refer to paragraphs 4.12 through 4.30 for specific guidance.) Otherwise,

processing will be delayed while the form with an informal note (or "chit") is returned to the mission requesting the missing information. If a shipment cannot be cleared, the form will be returned to the requesting mission or organization with a rejection "chit".

Once a shipment has been approved, OFM/Customs will return the blue copy for requests outside the Washington metropolitan area and the blue and white copies for requests inside the Washington metropolitan area to the requesting office, indicating the date of approval by the Department of State and/or the BCBP date of authorization to the customs port. The shipment is then considered ready for pick up or delivery to the requesting office or individual.

Detailed instructions for the completion of a DS-1504 (Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise begin at paragraph 4.12.)

4.2 Categories Constituting a Shipment

Paragraphs 4.3 through 4.10 detail the various categories that can constitute a shipment that may be eligible for duty-free entry into the United States.

4.3 Household Effects/ Personal Items, Alcoholic Beverages, etc.

This category includes all articles which were in the entitled person's and/or family member's possession abroad that are now being imported in connection with the arrival of the entitled person and/or family member and are intended for personal or household use. It also includes articles subsequently imported by those who qualify. Persons who have not received their Personal Identification Number (PID #) must attach a copy of the identification page of the passport, a copy of the page showing the U.S. visa, and either the Notification of Appointment of Foreign Diplomatic Officer and Career Consular Officer, form DS-2003, or Notification of Appointment of Foreign Government Employee, form DS-2004, to the Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise Form DS-1504.

Items imported for the accommodation of others or intended for sale or other commercial purposes are not entitled to free entry.

4.4 Automobiles

Numerical limitations on the importation of vehicles by personnel assigned to embassies and consulates are governed by reciprocal treatment of U.S. personnel by the sending state. Diplomatic and consular officers and qualified employees of

bilateral missions for whom the Department has no reciprocity policy, as well as diplomatic-level officers of the United Nations (UN), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Principal Resident Representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) may import two (2) new cars per family during a 3-year period.

Other entitled personnel of international organizations may only import an automobile which has been in their possession prior to their first arrival in the United States in connection with their posting or in connection with subsequent arrivals from home leave or official travel. They are also limited to two (2) new or used cars during a 3-year period and may not import vehicles which do not conform to U.S. safety and emissions standards.

Imported automobiles that do not conform to U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) safety and emissions standards may not be sold in the United States unless they are brought into compliance. For further information, consult the BCBP website, www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/import/infrequent_importer_info/. If such automobiles are not converted (brought into compliance), they must be exported at the end of the employee's tour of duty, or sold as scrap. Non-compliance with these standards does not exempt the entitled persons listed above from completing the DOT and EPA forms requested by BCBP.

4.5 Bonded Warehouse Requests

DS-1504 requests associated with orders from bonded warehouse facilities may be submitted to OFM if such requests are intended for the official benefit of eligible foreign missions and international organizations or for the personal use of their eligible members. Such articles include, but are not limited to alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and foodstuffs.

OFM reserves the right to impose quantitative restrictions on foreign missions or their members on the basis of reciprocity. In general, OFM expects responsible senior officials of all eligible bilateral missions and international organizations to screen such requests for reasonableness of quantity and frequency of submission. All bonded warehouse facility merchandise listed on any form DS-1504 request must be available for the consignee to take possession of immediately.

Foreign missions, international organizations and their

eligible members may obtain consumables (with the exception of those prohibited by law) free of duty and any applicable tax, whether imported directly from abroad or withdrawn from bonded warehouse facilities.

Personal Goods Request:

Eligible members of foreign missions and international organizations wishing to obtain duty and tax-free purchases from a bonded warehouse facility must adhere to the following procedures:

1. Eligible mission/organization members must first obtain form DS-1504 from the mission or organization management office or from OFM's Internet website (www.state.gov/ofm/).
2. The mission/organization member must provide accurate information in the following boxes:
 - a. **Name of Embassy, Legation, or Int'l Org.;**
 - b. **Port of Clearance;**
 - c. **Consignee's Name & Title¹;**
 - d. **Purpose²;**
 - e. **Personal Identification Number;**
 - f. **Carrier/Supplier** (i.e. name of bonded warehouse facility and its address);
 - g. in **Description of Merchandise**, include the following –
 - Merchandise bond or item number,
 - Item description (e.g., Cabernet Sauvignon),
 - Order size³,
 - Quantity of merchandise requested,
 - Statement of Purpose,
 - Delivery address of merchandise⁴; and
 - h. requests for International Organization members must be dated and bear the signature of that agency's authorized representative on each page; alternatively
 - i. bilateral mission members must have their mission's official seal, the initials of the authorized mission representative and the date of the action affixed to each page of the form.
3. Once the required information is provided on the form, the foreign mission or international organization to which the individual is assigned must submit the request to OFM for certification.
4. If the consignee is eligible for this privilege, the form DS-1504 is completed correctly and the request is determined to be of a reasonable quantity, OFM will certify that the consignee is eligible for the privilege of duty-free entry.

Notes for the preceding section:

¹ OFM will no longer approve form DS-1504 requests that include the phrase “and all others so entitled.” All eligible individuals must submit their own form DS-1504 listing them as the consignee along with the merchandise they wish to obtain tax and duty-free.

² OFM will no longer approve form DS-1504 requests associated with bonded warehouse merchandise for the purpose of **Official and Personal**. All bonded warehouse merchandise requests must be marked as **Official** or **Personal**.

³ Order sizes must be expressed in the following ways: Beer = # of cases, Cigars = # of boxes, Cigarettes = # of cartons, Electronics = # of items, Fragrance (perfume/cologne) = # of bottles, Liquor (spirits/liqueurs) = # of bottles, Sodas = # of cases, Sweets (chocolates) = # of boxes, Tobacco (chewing) = # of pouches/cans, Water = # of cases, Wine (includes champagnes/sparkling wines) = # of bottles.

⁴ The delivery address must be either the consignee’s home or that of the foreign mission/international organization to which he/she is assigned.

Official Goods Request:

Eligible foreign missions and international organizations wishing to obtain duty and tax-free purchases from a bonded warehouse facility intended for official use should adhere to the following procedures:

1. Eligible missions/organization must first obtain form DS-1504 from the mission or organization management office or from OFM’s Internet website (www.state.gov/ofm/).
2. The mission/organization member must provide accurate information in the following boxes:
 - a. **Name of Embassy, Legation, or Int’l Org.;**
 - b. **Port of Clearance;**
 - c. **Consignee’s Name & Title⁵;**
 - d. **Purpose⁶;**
 - e. (Chief of Mission’s) **Personal Identification Number;**
 - f. **Carrier/Supplier** (i.e. name of bonded warehouse facility and its address);
 - g. in **Description of Merchandise**, include the following –
 - Merchandise bond or item number,
 - Item description (e.g., Cabernet Sauvignon),
 - Order size⁷,
 - Quantity of merchandise requested,
 - Statement of Purpose,
 - Delivery address of merchandise⁸; and
 - h. requests for International Organization members must be dated and bear the signature of that agency’s

- authorized representative on each page; alternatively
- i. bilateral mission members must have their mission's official seal, the initials of the authorized mission representative and the date of the action affixed to each page of the form.

3. Once the required information is provided on the form, the foreign mission or international organization to which the individual is assigned must submit the request to OFM for certification.

4. If the consignee is eligible for this privilege, their form DS-1504 is completed correctly and the request is determined to be a reasonable quantity, OFM will certify the submission thereby authorizing the bonded warehouse facility to complete the transaction.

Notes for the preceding section:

⁵ OFM will no longer approve form DS-1504 requests that include the phrase "and all others so entitled." All eligible individuals must submit their own form DS-1504 listing them as the consignee along with the merchandise they wish to obtain tax and duty-free.

⁶ OFM will no longer approve form DS-1504 requests associated with bonded warehouse merchandise for the purpose of **Official and Personal**. All bonded warehouse merchandise requests must be marked as **Official** or **Personal**.

⁷ Order sizes must be expressed in the following ways: Beer = # of cases, Cigars = # of boxes, Cigarettes = # of cartons, Electronics = # of items, Fragrance (perfume/cologne) = # of bottles, Liquor (spirits/liqueurs) = # of bottles, Sodas = # of cases, Sweets (chocolates) = # of boxes, Tobacco (chewing) = # of pouches/cans, Water = # of cases, Wine (includes champagnes/sparkling wines) = # of bottles.

⁸ The delivery address must be either the consignee's home or that of the foreign mission/international organization to which he/she is assigned

4.6 Baggage and Effects of International Organization Staff Personnel

Section 148.87(a) of the U.S. Customs Regulations interprets the term "baggage and effects" (as used in Section 3 of Public Law 291 of the International Organization Immunities Act) to include all articles which were in the possession of the person entitled to the benefits of the Act while that person was abroad. Proof of possession may be requested before authorization of a duty-free entry is approved. BCBP has consistently maintained that such "possession" carries the implication that the article does, in fact, exist (is not an item which was ordered to be manufactured, crafted, or assembled overseas for the purchasers after their return to the United

States), and could not have been brought on the same trip because of baggage weight restrictions, lack of space, or a similar reason (documentation must be presented to confirm such a situation). In order to qualify for duty-free entry under Section 3 of Public Law 291, it is also necessary for the owner to have been physically present in the country from which the shipment originates. Possession of an automobile may be established by the payment of funds, the transfer of title, or having taken delivery in the country of purchase. In all cases, shipment of the item (or motor vehicle) should be arranged to coincide with the staff member's arrival or shortly thereafter.

According to Section 3 of Public Law 291, the baggage and effects of alien employees of international organizations, their families, and servants are admitted free of customs duties and any applicable taxes in connection with the initial arrival of the owner or the return from an official mission or home leave abroad. Included as "baggage and effects" are alcoholic beverages and new or used vehicles. All motor vehicles must meet U.S. safety and emission standards and are subject to the same general restrictions imposed by the Department for embassy and consular personnel on the importation of new vehicles, i.e., two cars every 3 years.

For eligible international organization staff members, alcoholic beverages are limited to the following amounts --

- first arrival to take up duties in the U.S. – that quantity of liquor and wine already in the possession of the person concerned at his/her previous residence (no restrictions are placed on this “personal wine cellar” currently);
- subsequent arrivals -- a reasonable amount for personal consumption, but any excess will be charged duty ("Reasonable amount" will generally be limited to 12 bottles of hard liquor and 24 bottles of wine or a total of 36 bottles of wine.

For those requests which meet the requirements stated above, OFM allows a reasonable period of time for the goods to be shipped to the United States, usually within 30 days of the staff member's arrival. In some cases, shipments received within 90 days of the staff member's arrival may also qualify for duty-free entry; however, unless there are extenuating circumstances, customs duties will be imposed beyond that.

4.7 Agricultural Products

Agricultural products imported directly from a foreign country are regulated by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards, which require that all such products be declared and submitted for inspection at the time of entry. All newly arriving personnel should be informed that agricultural products (such as vegetables, fruits, plants, meats, or animal products) carried as part of their household effects will be quarantined and/or destroyed if they do not meet USDA standards. Consult the USDA\APHIS website, <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/travel/>, for the most up-to-date information. All meat products imported into the United States should be accompanied by a copy of certificate(s) from the foreign agricultural authority and a DS-1504 form. For additional information, the missions also should consult the site <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits> before importing fruits, vegetables and cut flowers into the United States to verify the admissibility of the product. All fresh fruits and vegetables are subject to USDA inspection as a condition of entry.

If customs officials have reasonable grounds to suspect that prohibited items are part of shipment of household effects, the personal baggage may be subject to inspection in accordance with the provisions of Articles 36 and 37 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) or Article 49 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR). To prevent any misunderstanding concerning these requirements, missions are requested to contact OFM/Customs when any of their personnel are importing agricultural products or if newly assigned personnel are inquiring about the possibility of including agricultural products as part of their personal and/or household effects.

4.8 Pets

The importation of pets is subject to health, quarantine, agriculture, wildlife, and customs requirements and prohibitions. The U.S. Public Health Service requires that pets brought into the country (particularly dogs, cats, and turtles) be examined at the port of first entry for possible evidence of disease that can be transmitted to humans. Current guidance on the importation of pets is available on the USDA\APHIS website, <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/travel/>. It is suggested that incoming mission personnel consult this site for detailed information on the importation of household pets.

4.9 Items Imported for Official Use of Diplomatic

1. Diplomatic and Consular Pouches:

A diplomatic or consular pouch is defined as a sealed package, envelope, bag, pouch, or other container that is

Missions, Consulates, or International Organizations

clearly labeled and used exclusively to carry official correspondence, documents, or articles between:

- embassies, legations, consulates, and the foreign office of any foreign government with which the United States has diplomatic relations; or
- headquarters or any other office of a designated public international organization and one of its regional offices in the United States or a foreign country (as referred to in Section 148.87(b) of the U.S. Customs Regulations).

Diplomatic pouches are inviolable and therefore may not be detained or opened under any circumstances, nor are such pouches subject to duty. Pouches must --

- bear the official seal of the government or international organization concerned;
- be addressed to one of the offices of the entity whose seal the pouch carries;
- have a detachable certificate affixed under the seal that is signed by a responsible official of the originating foreign office, embassy, legation, consulate, or international organization and which describes the pouch and certifies that it contains nothing but official communications, documents, or articles.

Pouches that arrive with the required detachable certificate may be cleared immediately; the certificate will be retained by BCBP officials and provides the authority for immediate release.

Pouches which arrive *without* the proper detachable certificate but which bear the official seal and are addressed as outlined above may also be cleared with minimum delay by providing OFM/Customs with a DS-1504. Please see Paragraph 4.23 for instructions.

2. Office Supplies:

In accordance with a BCBP directive that provides for the duty-free entry of certain official shipments of foreign governments, only those shipments that contain paper supplies and printed matter may be imported without OFM coordination. These shipments may be entered upon the presentation of a letter -- on letterhead stationery of the diplomatic or consular mission bearing the seal of the foreign government concerned and signed by an authorized agent of

the receiving foreign government -- which describes the material being imported and certifies that it is for official use.

The term “paper supplies” means paper supplies for use in the offices of foreign embassies and legations, consular offices, and offices of public international organizations.

The term “printed matter” means those printed materials which are necessary to the operation of foreign diplomatic offices or public international organization offices and will be used only in such offices; and other printed material of a non-commercial nature customarily used in such offices for the purpose of acquainting people in the United States with the history and other characteristics of the foreign country or international organization represented, which is the property of a foreign government or international organization, does not contain advertising matter, and is imported for free distribution.

Shipments of official-use materials that have been released upon presentation of an official letter as outlined above may be inspected to identify the contents.

All other types of office supplies and equipment (such as typewriters, office computers, calculators, furniture, rugs, paintings, and other decorative materials for use by embassies, consulates, trade commissioners or international organizations) will also be admitted duty-free, upon submission of Form DS-1504 to OFM/Customs.

3. Articles Imported for Exhibition:

Clearance may also be granted for material imported by a foreign government for exhibition.

With regard to material imported for exhibition, the following general rules will assist the diplomatic mission in considering whether or not to send a request to OFM for duty-free entry.

- a. If the articles are intended for sale, they are subject to duty regardless of their status as property of the foreign government. If the articles are not intended for sale but are for other commercial use such as exhibition to persuade prospective American buyers, they are subject to duty.
- b. If the articles are intended for display as in a cultural exhibit in a commercial establishment such as a department store, hotel, art gallery, or bank, free entry is permitted provided the foreign government assures that:

- the commercial establishment involved will not charge admission (other than a possible nominal consideration to cover administrative expenses of the particular exhibition);
- neither the importing foreign government nor the commercial establishment will derive any direct commercial benefit from the exhibit; and
- none of the articles will be offered for sale or sold while in the U.S.

Where articles are imported for no commercial purpose and are exhibited on noncommercial premises with the sole view of acquainting residents of the United States with the art, customs, or products of the importing country, they are generally accorded free entry as a matter of international courtesy.

Because BCBP carefully scrutinizes all requests for the duty-free admission of exhibit materials, diplomatic missions should give full details of the importation, including the place or places of exhibit, the purpose of the exhibition, the ownership of the property, and a list of the articles to be shown.

Embassies should contact OFM/Customs before arranging to import items intended for exhibition to determine whether the necessary requirements for free entry have been met.

4.10 Blanket Requests for Clearance of Foreign Government-Owned Equipment

OFM/Customs processes requests for blanket authorization of foreign government-owned equipment being temporarily imported for repair and return, or in conjunction with joint projects being carried out by the foreign government and a U.S. Government entity (but not in connection with a foreign military sales case). The request for clearance of these items should be submitted by diplomatic note or official letter providing the following information:

- state whether this request is a new blanket request (to be established) or an old blanket request (renewal);
- names of all consignees;
- purpose of the blanket authorization request (repair and return, for incorporation into a finished product, in conjunction with joint projects being carried out by your Government and a U.S. Government entity);

- identification of the items;
- approximate size of the shipments;
- special markings on container (Code words);
- ports of entry;
- frequency of entry;
- ports of departure;
- time period for which the blanket authorization is requested;
- a statement certifying that the shipment is the property of your Government, and will remain so while in the United States; and
- a statement certifying that the shipments are not part of the foreign military sales program.

Clearance of foreign government-owned equipment imported in connection with the foreign military sales program is processed by the Department of State's Office of Munitions Control. The processing of these requests requires six to nine months.

4.11 Refund of Duty

The Office of Foreign Missions is unable to assist in obtaining a refund of customs duties paid.

4.12 Detailed instructions for completion of the DS-1504

The following paragraphs explain how to fill out form DS-1504, Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise. Each numbered paragraph provides guidance on the information required in the block of the same name on the DS-1504 form. Bolded sub-paragraph headings provide guidance for a particular category of shipment or a particular mode of shipping. Please note that all DS-1504 forms must be typewritten.

4.13 Name of Embassy, Legation or International Organization

Identify the country name of the Embassy, Consulate, Legation, or International Organization (hereinafter referred to as the "foreign mission").

4.14 Port of Clearance

Air: Enter the airport of arrival where goods will clear customs. (If the destination airport is not the first customs port

of arrival in the United States, refer to "**Immediate Transportation**" paragraph below.)

Vessel: Enter the port where goods will clear customs. (If the final destination port is not the first customs port of arrival in the United States, refer to "Immediate Transportation" paragraph below.)

Truck: Enter the name of the place of border crossing from either Canada or Mexico.

Immediate Transportation (IT): For shipments which arrive initially at one port of entry but are in-transit to another for customs clearance, enter the port where the items will ultimately be cleared by Customs (the destination port). In these cases, also known as "transportation in-bond," the Customs officer at the initial Port of Entry accepts a form CF- 7512, "Transportation Entry and Manifest of Goods Subject to Customs Inspection and Permit." The shipping agent or Customs clearing agent should provide a copy of this document to be attached to the DS-1504.

Mail: Enter the Customs Port where the goods will arrive.

Bonded Warehouse: Enter the port in which the Customs-bonded warehouse is located. Also, please see Section 4.5 (above) for detailed instructions regarding bonded warehouse importations.

4.15 Consignee

For official shipments, the consignee will be the foreign mission or other recognized entity having duty-free admission privileges.

For personal shipments, provide the name and title of the individual to whom the goods belong and for whose exclusive use they are being imported. The individual must have been (or is being) notified to the Department of State and must be eligible for duty-free admission privileges. **Please note:** U.S. citizens and permanent residents of the United States are not eligible.

The consignee should be identified on the shipping document as follows –

- **For Air Shipments:** Enter the name of the person or entity identified on the Air Waybill. If the foreign mission is listed on the Air Waybill but the goods are actually for the personal use of an entitled individual, list the name of the

individual in parentheses after the name of the foreign mission -- example: Embassy of Utopia (for John Doe).

- **For Sea Freight:** Enter the name of the person or entity identified on the Bill of Lading. If the foreign mission is listed on the Bill of Lading but the goods are actually for the personal use of an entitled individual, list the name of the individual in parentheses after the name of the foreign mission -- example: Embassy of Utopia (for John Doe).

- **For Truck Cargo:** Enter the name of the person or entity identified on the truck manifest. If the foreign mission is listed on the truck manifest but the goods are actually for the personal use of an entitled individual, list the name of the individual in parentheses after the name of the foreign mission -- example: Embassy of Utopia (for John Doe).

- **For IT Shipments:** Enter the name of person or entity shown on the Immediate Transport document. If the foreign mission is listed on the IT document but the goods are actually for the personal use of an entitled individual, list the name of the individual in parentheses after the name of the foreign mission -- example: Embassy of Utopia (for John Doe).

- **For Mail:** Enter the name of the addressee.

- **For Bonded Warehouse Purchases:** Please see Section 4.5 (above) for detailed instructions regarding bonded warehouse importations.

4.16 Purpose

Select the appropriate purpose:

Official: The Customs Regulations of the United States permit duty free admission of articles which are the property of a foreign government and which will be used only in connection with noncommercial functions. For all importation requests for official purposes, please explain the official nature of the request in the "Description of Merchandise" block below. Categories of official requests are:

- office supplies, equipment, and other articles for the official use of a foreign government;

- items for an exhibition which is sponsored by or participated in by a foreign government and which is not connected with commercial undertakings. To qualify for duty-free importation, no admission may be charged and

items may neither be sold nor advertised for sale;

- equipment being imported for limited duration and which will remain the property of the foreign government until it is exported, such as equipment being serviced or repaired;
- items intended to be permanent fixtures, such as carpeting, draperies, construction materials, etc.;
- printed matter that is the property of a foreign government, that does not contain advertising matter, and that is being imported for free distribution.

Personal: Foreign mission personnel qualify for free importation privileges under the provisions of the U.S. Customs Regulations, Sections 148.85(a) and 148.85(b); Articles 36(1)(b) and 37(2) of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR); and Articles 50(1)(b) and 50(2) of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR). Accordingly, eligible personnel may import articles, with the exception of those prohibited by law, free of duty. Such items must be for the personal or family use of eligible personnel. The Department of States does not impose any quantity or time limitations, except to reciprocate for like treatment by a sending government, under the terms of Articles 47 and 72 of the VCDR and VCCR respectively.

Official and Personal: This block should be checked if the request contains both official and personal goods in a combined shipment. If so, the official goods should be clearly identified as such in the "Description of Merchandise" block. The "Official and Personal" block is also used to request duty-free admission of alcoholic beverages and other consumables to be used for official entertainment purposes by a foreign mission. Such items are by nature intended for personal consumption, and should not be identified as solely for official use. Identify the type of official function in the "Description of Merchandise" block. Please see Section 4.5 (above) for detailed instructions regarding bonded warehouse importations.

4.17 Personal Identification Number (PID):

For personal import requests, enter the Personal Identification Number of the requester. For official requests, leave this block empty.

If an individual for whom duty-free admission is being requested is newly-assigned, check the appropriate box and provide the following information:

- date of arrival in the United States (this may be typed in the box marked "Enter PID");
- copy of passport page showing photograph and name;
- copy of visa; and
- copy of the "Notification of Appointment" form DS-2003 or DS-2004.

The Department of State may on occasion accept and initiate processing of the request for duty-free admission of personal effects prior to the arrival of the individual in order to facilitate his or her establishment. In this case, all of the above information must be provided, except that the DS-2003/2004 will lack the individual's photograph and signature. Although initial processing of paperwork can be initiated upon receipt of these documents, final authorization for release of the personal effects will be granted only upon submission of the fully-completed and signed DS-2003/2004 after the individual's arrival. Requests to initiate the clearance process prior to arrival will be accepted only from foreign missions whose governments provide reciprocal courtesies to U.S. personnel. Each such request must contain the following statement in the "Description of Merchandise" block:

"This request to initiate clearance prior to arrival of the consignee is made in accordance with reciprocal treatment provided to U.S. personnel in [name of country]."

4.18 Carrier/ Supplier

Air: Enter the name of the airline on which the goods will arrive in the U.S. and the flight number and arrival date. The flight number must have the carrier prefix as well as the number, for example: "Skyway Airlines Flight SA-#100, date of arrival August 30, 2003"

Vessel: Enter the name of the steamship company and the name of the vessel, the voyage number and the expected arrival date (ETA).

Truck: For shipments crossing by land from Canada or Mexico, enter the name of the trucking company and the estimated date/time of arrival at the border.

IT: Enter the name of the common carrier to which goods were released from the Port of Entry and identify who is transporting the goods to their final destination, and the expected arrival date.

Mail: Enter the name and address of the post office where the shipment is being held.

Bonded Warehouse: Enter the name and address of the importer of the goods. (Note: this may be different from the bonded warehouse where the goods are located, unless the importer operates his own bonded warehouse.)

4.19 Customs Entry or Manifest No.

IT: Enter the IT number. (Sometimes an Air Waybill may be stamped by BCBP as the IT document. If that is done, indicate the Air Waybill number as the IT number.)

All others: Leave blank.

4.20 Air Waybill or Bill of Lading No.

Air: Enter the Air Waybill number prefixed by "AWB."

Note: In some cases a consolidated shipment will arrive in the United States under a Master Air Waybill and is split up for delivery to different consignees for whom House Air Waybills are assigned. In such cases, the Master Air Waybill number should be listed in this block and the House Air Waybill (HAWB) number entered in the "Description of Merchandise" block below. A Master Air Waybill always has eleven digits.

A copy of all Air Waybills must be attached to the DS-1504.

Vessel: Enter the Bill of Lading number prefixed by "B/L." If there are both Master or Ocean and House Bills of Lading, list the Master or Ocean here and put the House number in the "Description of Merchandise" block below. Master or Ocean Bills of Lading are usually identified as MBL or OBL; House as HBL. Master or Ocean Bills of Lading always start with four letters that identify the shipping company. Those numbers are always clearly identified on the Notice of Arrival form.

A copy of all Bills of Lading must be attached to the DS-1504. Also, a copy of the Notice of Arrival should be attached, if available.

Truck: Enter the Manifest Number, if available. (There may not be one assigned.)

IT: Enter the AWB or B/L number as appropriate. (In addition, include the IT number in the "Customs Entry or Manifest No." block.)

Mail: Leave this entry blank.

Bonded Warehouse: Leave this entry blank.

4.21 Total Weight

List the total weight of the goods being imported. This information is available from the Air Waybill, the Bill of Lading, or the mail notification letter. Indicate whether the weight measure is in pounds or kilograms. For bonded warehouse purchases, leave this block empty.

4.22 Mail Entry No.

For mail deliveries only, enter the control number from the Letter of Notification. This is usually found in the upper right corner. For all other types of shipment, leave blank. Note that the address of the mail facility should be indicated in the "**Carrier/Supplier**" block above. Please attach the original copy of the notification letter to the DS-1504. The original will be returned to the Embassy attached to the approved copy of the DS-1504.

4.23 Description of Merchandise

The following elements must be included on all requests for clearance:

Description: The items in the shipment must be fully described. If a shipment under one Bill of Lading contains different types of cargo (for example household effects and a vehicle) both should be clearly identified. However, do not submit separate DS-1504 forms for different items if they are combined on the same Bill of Lading or Air Waybill. For official shipments, the description should include confirmation of governmental ownership and the intended disposition (example: remain in the mission, export, distribute free to the public, etc.).

The following categories of imports require specialized information in this block.

- **Motor Vehicles:** Include the make, model, year of manufacture, and vehicle identification number (VIN). State whether the vehicle is "conforming" or "non-conforming." This means that it either does or does not meet the standards of the U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The applicable certifications should be typed on the DS-1504, for example:

"The vehicle does conform to DOT safety standards"
or...

"The vehicle does not conform to DOT safety standards, however the consignee requests exemption from compliance with these requirements"

and,

"The vehicle does conform to EPA environmental standards"

or

"The vehicle does not conform to EPA environmental standards, however the consignee requests exemption from compliance with these requirements."

BCBP requires that the appropriate DOT and EPA forms be completed prior to releasing the vehicle. Foreign missions may choose to complete these forms in advance to expedite processing, but it is not necessary to attach these forms to the DS-1504. Nevertheless, BCBP strongly encourages completion of the forms prior to submitting the DS-1504 to Customs, since often the person claiming the vehicle has no knowledge of or authority to sign, the declaration forms.

Note: BCBP requires the "diplomatic" consignee to register the imported vehicle with the Office of Foreign Missions prior to its release. Foreign missions should initiate the registration process and importation request simultaneously to ensure that the clearance is not delayed.

Firearms: Enter the make of the weapon(s), year of manufacture, and serial number.

Note: Missions are reminded that granting permission to possess firearms in the United States is a matter which resides within the jurisdiction of local authorities. Any request to possess or carry a firearm must be made to the appropriate authority in the jurisdiction in which the mission member proposes to keep the weapon. BCBP officials will release imported firearms only upon presentation of an authorization form issued by the appropriate authorities.

Agricultural products: The U.S. Department of Agriculture has strict regulations on the importation of agricultural products such as meat, fruits and vegetables, and plants. A detailed inventory should be provided for any shipment containing these items. Also, certifications or other documentation may be required before these items can be released. Foreign missions intending to import agricultural products should familiarize themselves with the specialized requirements well before the intended arrival date. (Please see Section 4.7.)

Purchases from Bonded Warehouses: Please see Section 4.5 for detailed guidance regarding purchases/importations from bonded warehouses.

Pouches: Pouches which arrive without the proper detachable certificate but which bear the official seal and are addressed as outlined in Paragraph 4.9, above, may also be cleared with minimum delay by providing OFM/Customs with a DS-1504. No pouches will be cleared telephonically. The following information is required on the DS-1504 --

- statement that the package is a pouch,
- Air Waybill number,
- entry or manifest number, if applicable, and
- name of the carrier and the airport where the pouch is being held.

Exhibition Materials: Requests for duty free clearance of exhibition materials must contain all of the particulars of the shipment and the exhibition as follows --

- ownership and a good description of the materials;
- description of items, identify subject matter including government publications and printed matter;
- location and dates of the exhibition (if outside the foreign mission, provide a copy of the contract with the hosting location);
- sponsorship, purpose, and intended participants;
- intended disposition of goods;
- state whether items will be offered for sale, distributed gratis, or orders will be taken at this exhibition; and
- state final disposition of goods.

This information must be typed in the "Description of Merchandise" block, even if it requires two or more DS-1504 forms to provide the requested information. Flyers, programs, announcements, and contracts may be submitted as attachments to the DS-1504.

Quantity: Enter the number of cartons, cases, packages,

boxes, crates, or items.

Note: pallets, containers, skids, and igloos are means of transport, not measurements of quantity. They are insufficient to describe the quantity unless the number of cartons, packages, boxes, or items is identified. Example: "One 20' container of personal effects containing 220 boxes" is acceptable. If the goods are containerized, indicate the container number in this entry box.

Horizontal Line: Draw a horizontal line across the request immediately following description and/or after last item(s) ordered from any Bonded Warehouse.

Delivery Address: Enter the address where the shipment will be delivered.

Location of Goods: Enter the name and complete address of the storage facility where the goods are being held and from which BCBP will release them. Occasionally, the storage location may not be known when the DS-1504 is submitted; for example, when a sea shipment is less than a full container load (LCL). Fully describe any such situation and provide the name, address, and telephone number of the moving and storage company handling the customs clearance. Customs brokers do not hold goods in storage. Therefore, the address of the customs broker should not be entered here.

Air: Enter the name, address, building number, and telephone number of the facility where the goods are being held for Customs clearance. This may be either the airline's own warehouse, a Customs Container Station, or a Customs Examination Station (CES) or a Customs border warehouse facility.

Vessel: Enter the name, address, building number, and telephone number of the facility where the goods are being held for Customs clearance. This may be the steamship company warehouse, a Customs Container Station, or a Customs Examination Station (CES).

Truck: Enter the name, address, building number, and phone number of the facility where the goods are being held for Customs clearance. This may be a Customs Container Station, a Customs Examination Station (CES), or a Customs border warehouse facility.

Bonded Warehouse or Foreign Trade Zone: Enter the name and address of the bonded warehouse or foreign trade

zone where the goods are located. This information may be different from the name and address of the importer from whom the goods were ordered. If unsure, ask the importer for the exact address of the warehouse.

Mail: Enter the name and address of the post office at which the goods are being held.

Point of Contact: At the bottom of the "Description of Merchandise" block, please enter the name and telephone number of the person at the foreign mission who can be contacted for further information.

4.24 Signature of Authorized Representative of an International Organization

This block must be completed by all international organizations. Embassies and Consulates should leave it blank.

4.25 Date

Date that the DS-1504 is prepared (must be completed by all requesters).

4.26 Embassy or Consulate Seal

Foreign Missions should stamp, initial, and date each copy of the DS-1504 form. If a mission chooses to, it may use an embossing seal that will penetrate all six copies, rather than stamping each copy.

4.27 U.S. Department of State Approval

Leave blank.

4.28 USUN

Leave blank.

4.29 U.S. Customs Authorization

Leave blank.

4.30 Attachments

Attach photocopies of all pertinent paperwork as. This should include all of the available and applicable shipping and personal identification documentation identified in the detailed instructions above, such as --

- Air Waybill (Master and House, if applicable);
- Bill of Lading (Master or Ocean and House, if applicable)
Carrier's certificate Manifest Inventory list;

- CF- 7512 Immediate Transport Document Notification for mail being held;
- DSP-2003/2004 notification of appointment form (photocopy);
- Identification page of the applicant's passport (copy only); and
- Visa (copy only).

Forms Applicable to this Section

DS-1504 [Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise](#)

interactive form in ".pdf" format can be accessed here, completed on-line, and printed out for submission to your servicing OFM office

EPA 3520-1 [Declaration Form - Importation of Motor Vehicles and Motor Vehicle Engines Subject to Federal Air Pollution Regulations](#)

"read only" form in ".pdf" format. It is provided for purposes of illustration only. Until, further notice, applicants must submit the multi-copy form available at port of entry or from the Environmental Protection Agency.

HS-7 [Declaration - Importation of Motor Vehicles and Motor Vehicle Equipment Subject to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety, Bumper and Theft Prevention Standards](#)

"read only" form in ".pdf" format. It is provided for purposes of illustration only. Until further notice, applicants must submit the multi-copy form available at port of entry: or from the National Highway Transportation Safety Agency.