

## **2 FAM 1200 ACTION AND CLEARANCE PROCEDURES**

### **2 FAM 1210 GENERAL PROCESSING**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*  
*(Originating Office: S/ES-EX)*

### **2 FAM 1211 PRINCIPLES**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

- a. "Action" and "clearance" are the processes by which the Department makes decisions. The processes place responsibility for action upon one office while *ensuring* that the information and opinions of other interested offices are brought to bear on the proposed action.
- b. If action is frustrated by over burdensome clearances, the results can be as bad as if no coordination had been attempted. The action office should consult widely but give the right of clearance only to those offices with a substantial interest in the proposed action.
- c. The action office, as a part of its responsibility for completing action, has the duty to overcome delays and, if necessary, to present a matter for final decision without the concurrence or dissent of a delaying office.

### **2 FAM 1212 ASSIGNMENT OF ACTION**

*(CT:GEN-316; 02-01-2005)*

The Executive Secretariat or an originating office assigns action responsibility on the basis of the division of responsibilities set forth in 1 FAM, Organization and Functions, and other guides. Any office may propose to the action office a change of action responsibility.

### **2 FAM 1213 RESPONSIBILITY OF ACTION OFFICE**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

Action responsibility is *a procedure* for ensuring the completion of all steps on an issue within the scope of the Department's authority. The action office is responsible for:

- (1) Preparing an action document after consulting the necessary materials and people;
- (2) Determining the clearing offices, *with input from the Executive Secretariat*. Clearing offices may not add or delete clearances without the approval of the action office *and should seek to minimize multiple clearances within their own bureau. The Executive Secretariat may require certain minimal clearances when assigning action responsibility*;
- (3) Making the initial determination as to where the final decision should be made;
- (4) Obtaining clearances; *and*
- (5) Overcoming delays and, if necessary, presenting the matter to higher authority for decision without the concurrence or dissent of a delaying office.

## **2 FAM 1214 CLEARANCE OR ADVICE**

### **2 FAM 1214.1 Clearance**

*(CT:GEN-316; 02-01-2005)*

Any office that has a substantial interest in a proposed action should be a clearing office. A clearing office may concur in or dissent from the proposed action. If a dissent is not reconciled, the action office must submit the proposed action and the dissent for decision to an authority superior to both offices.

### **2 FAM 1214.2 Advice**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

An office *with* only a collateral interest is one that has useful information or views to contribute but whose field of responsibility is not vitally affected by the proposed action. Such an office *must be consulted regardless of whether it is included for clearance. If the office being consulted dissents, the authorizing and clearing officers must be made aware of the dissent. Drafting and action officers should reconcile differing views as soon as possible or submit it to a higher authority.*

## 2 FAM 1215 METHODS OF OBTAINING CLEARANCES

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

Obtain clearances by:

- (1) Forwarding a copy of the document requiring clearance (including relevant attachments) to each of the clearing offices. This is the standard practice and is usually accomplished electronically;
- (2) Seeking clearances without providing complete documentation. Use this method only when the matter is already well understood by the clearing officer and urgency prevents forwarding the document requiring clearance and/or relevant attachments. It is usually accomplished telephonically, *and substantive clearance, vice clearance of a document in its entirety, can be indicated as "ok-(subs)"; and*
- (3) Submitting the document requiring clearance (including relevant attachments) to a committee or a meeting. Use this method only when the committee or the individuals present have authority to pass on the action.

**NOTE:** You may use a combination of methods if circumstances warrant doing so. *Clearance is indicated by marking "ok" next to the clearing officer's name and office designation on a clearance page attached to the action document. "Info," and other notations will not be considered clearances.*

## 2 FAM 1216 OPERATION OF CLEARANCE PROCEDURE

### 2 FAM 1216.1 Normal

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

The procedure followed by the action officer will vary with the circumstances, but normally the action officer will:

- (1) Consult informally with officers in other interested offices before preparing an action document;
- (2) Ascertain the views or obtain the approval of the action office before presenting an action document to other offices;
- (3) Present an action document for clearance at the lowest appropriate level, leaving to the clearing office the decision to refer the matter

- to a higher level within its own organization, if necessary;
- (4) Obtain a clearance from only one individual in any one office;
  - (5) *Obtain clearances from any bureaus or offices required by the Executive Secretariat; and*
  - (6) Present a document to an official above the assistant secretary level only after obtaining the prior clearance of the office of the assistant secretary of the bureau *that* has the action.

## **2 FAM 1216.2 Emergency**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

In an emergency, normal clearance may be dispensed with, but the action *bureau* assumes responsibility for departure from the prescribed process. The action office must promptly inform the units omitted from the clearance process of the action that has been taken.

## **2 FAM 1217 RESOLVING CLEARANCE DIFFERENCES**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

Process dissenting clearances as follows:

- (1) A clearing office with dissents must notify the action office promptly of its dissent and reasons for it. The clearing office may submit a memorandum to the action office with copies to the other interested offices;
- (2) Attempts must be made to reconcile the differences, first at the action officer level and then (if differences remain) at the office and bureau levels;
- (3) When differences cannot be resolved by informal discussion, the action office is responsible for carrying the action proposal on through the clearance process for the final decision by the authority superior to the differing offices. In doing so, the action office must make known to the other clearing offices and to the superior authority the dissent and the memorandum of the dissenting office. Alternatively, the dissenting office may seek to state its case directly to the superior authority; *and*
- (4) *Bureau staff assistants and/or principals' special assistants*, after seeing that reasonable efforts have been made to resolve the differences, must ensure that the differences are clearly set forth in a separate memorandum or a joint/split memorandum when the

proposed action is presented to a superior officer for final decision.

## **2 FAM 1218 RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF CORRESPONDENCE**

*(CT:GEN-354; 03-09-2009)*

- a. Except for diplomatic and ceremonial correspondence, the bureau or office originating the correspondence is responsible for:
  - (1) Reviewing, editing, and approving outgoing correspondence;
  - (2) Ensuring completeness and accuracy of contents, the proper security classification or administrative control designation, and proper tone; *and*
  - (3) Complying with any relevant regulations, guidelines, or procedures governing the correspondence (e.g., 5 FAM 200 (Correspondence), 5 FAM 470 (Access to and Use of Information), and 2 FAM 1130 (Executive orders, proclamations, and other Presidential documents)).
- b. The *Executive Secretariat's Office of Correspondence and Records (S/ES-CR)* is responsible for *reviewing* and *coordinating* diplomatic and ceremonial correspondence, including correspondence with international organizations *and all outgoing Diplomatic Notes from the Department*.

## **2 FAM 1219 FOLLOWUP ACTION**

*(TL:GEN-1030; 05-16-1977)*

Responsibility for followup on an action rests with the action office, unless it is specifically placed upon another office by the authority taking final action.