



United States Department of State

Special Issuance Agency

Washington, D.C. 20036-3617

Important Notice to Bearers of Official and Diplomatic Passports

A passport at all times remains the property of the United States and must be returned to the U.S. Government upon demand. 22 CFR § 51.7(a).

An official or diplomatic passport may be used **only** as long as you retain the position or status for which it was issued. An official or diplomatic passport must be returned to the Department of State upon the termination of the bearer's official or diplomatic status or at such other time as the Department may determine. 22 CFR §§ 51.4(c)-(d). State Department personnel may return their passport to the Special Issuance Agency directly or via their Bureau's Executive Office. Personnel of other agencies should return their passports through their agency headquarters.

Bearers of an official or diplomatic passport must use that passport when entering or exiting their country of assignment abroad and for return to the United States. Regular (tourist) passports must be used for personal travel except when entering or exiting the country of assignment abroad.

An official or diplomatic passport DOES:

- Attest that the bearer is traveling on official or diplomatic business for the U.S. Government, or is an accompanying family member of such a person. It implies no other status.

An official or diplomatic passport DOES NOT:

- Provide diplomatic immunity;
- Provide exemption from foreign laws, including customs, immigration or labor laws;
- Allow the bearer to carry classified or sensitive material across international borders;
- Allow the bearer to avoid questions by foreign immigration or to ignore security checkpoints;
- Provide a shield from arrest;
- Shield the bearer from the hazards of war, criminal violence, or terrorism;
- Grant benefits to which the bearer is not otherwise entitled.

An official or diplomatic passport MAY:

- Subject the bearer to increased scrutiny by foreign governments and other entities.

The enclosed passport carries the same message from the Secretary of State as appears in a regular passport requesting that the bearer be permitted "to pass without delay or hindrance" and given "all lawful aid and protection." In addition, the enclosed passport carries an endorsement announcing that the bearer is abroad on an official or diplomatic assignment for the U.S. Government. Thus, while traveling abroad with this passport you have a special obligation to respect the laws of the country in which you are present as well as U.S. federal government and agency-specific standards of conduct.

Many countries have visa requirements for official or diplomatic passport holders that are greater than the requirements for tourist passport holders. You may have to obtain an official or diplomatic visa depending on the countries to which you will travel. Note that the placement of an official or diplomatic visa in a passport does not, in itself, result in diplomatic status or diplomatic immunity in the host state. You can obtain information on foreign visa requirements for official and diplomatic passport holders at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/requirements/specialissuance/specialissuance_5339.html.