Mail and DIP Pouch Services

One of the best ways you can support a Marine is to send mail. Letters, photos, cards and care packages can boost morale immensely. Mail at post is a touch of home. E-mail may be quick, but Marines will often save the handwritten letters from home to read over and over again. If you intend to send mail, remember that it may take a long time to arrive or to get a reply. Additionally, please verify your address to which you are sending mail with the Marine.

Mail may be sent overseas by international postal service, Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO), Diplomatic Post Office (DPO), or by the U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Service. While international mail service is available around the world, it may not be reliable, especially in remote countries. Be sure to find out what mail service is like before using an international mail address.

**APO/FPO Addresses**

Through partnerships with other agencies, the Military Postal Service provides service to various locations overseas based on Department of Defense program requirements. The Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) ensures that overseas APO/FPO postal facilities and services meet USPS operational standards. Some posts are able to use APO or FPO services, but they are not available at every overseas post.

If there is an APO/FPO system available, personnel are expected to use this for their personal mailings. However, items sent by FEDEX, UPS, Airborne, DHL or any other private carrier cannot be addressed to APO/FPO and will be refused. If a vendor refuses to deliver to an APO/ FPO/DPO, then the personal “pouch” address may be used. Packages are usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches in length and girth combined. Some APO/FPO facilities have more stringent restrictions than others, and for specific restrictions, please consult your local U.S. Post Office. All APO/FPO mail requires a customs declaration and appropriate U.S. postage from the point of origin to the point of entry into the military postal service.

**Diplomatic Post Office (DPO)**

DPO began as a pilot program in 2003 and currently operates in 16 locations. DPO provides APO-like service, but is considerably more restrictive than traditional APO/FPO locations. DPO is mail being sent as pouch “via U.S. Mail” and all items must fit into a United States Postal Service bag. DPO service also requires the same customs declaration as APO/FPO. Be sure to verify each post’s preferred address format with your Marine. Do not add job titles, embassy names, or section location unless specifically instructed to do so, as this can cause confusion and delay arrival.

**State Department Diplomatic Pouch Services**

The term “diplomatic pouch” includes both the official pouch, which has a Washington D.C. zip code and the personal pouch, which has a Dulles, VA zip code. The official pouch should not be used for personal correspondence or personal packages, as this mail is irradiated by the U.S. Postal Service causing both delays and possible damage. The Department of State does have a zip code for personal mail to support personnel assigned to non-APO/FPO posts overseas. Mail sent to this address will not be irradiated. Marine Security Guards and their dependants living overseas can receive mail through this “Personal Pouch” address. Personal Pouch mail is limited to letters and packages at a maximum of 17x18x32 inches (no single dimension can exceed this limit) and a maximum weight of 50 pounds.

Since some posts have special size and weight restrictions in effect because of host government decisions and/or aircraft size limitations, please have your Marine verify the restrictions at post.

The frequency of Personal Pouch Mail is determined by volume of mail and other material. Larger posts receive up to three dispatches per week. A small post will receive a minimum of one dispatch per week. Pouches are sent on commercial airlines as air cargo. Passenger baggage and critical supplies have priority when space is limited.

Postage must be paid at the applicable domestic rate for the class of mail and type of service desired, subject to zone rates (for parcel post) from point of origin to Dulles, Virginia. Using express mail services does not get mail to a post any quicker because the express mail is only from the point of origin to Dulles. Packages may be mailed at any U.S. Post Office in the United States or sent to the State Department by UPS, FedEx, DHL, or other non-postal means of transportation, but again, this only delivers as far as the Dulles address.

When using the Dulles, VA zip code, for security reasons, nothing in the address field should reference in any way the mission, the office, a job title, or anything official about where your Marine or family member works.

Magazines and newspapers may also be sent via the personal diplomatic pouch. All parcels should be securely packed and sealed. Insured and registered mail services are not available for items sent through the pouch and the Department accepts no liability for loss or damage.

Articles prohibited by U.S. postal regulations may not be sent through State Department pouch facilities. Lists of such articles may be obtained from local postmasters or online. In addition, aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, items for resale, bulk supplies, corrosives (acids), currency, explosives, firearms, flammables, glass containers, illegal substances, incendiary materials, narcotics, plants, poisons, and radioactive substances are prohibited.

It is now permitted to send 16 ounces of liquid per box; liquids include anything that flows, such as syrup. Since it is forbidden to let the airlines know the contents of a Diplomatic Pouch, they must be assured that there is no hazardous material in any pouch, under any circumstance. For more information regarding restricted materials consult: http://www.usps.com/ aviationsecurity/welcome.htm .

The USPS guidelines and acceptance policy for Dulles personal pouch mail can be found at: http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/703.htm#wp1113914. The guidelines for USPS international mail (APO/FPO/DPO) can be found at www.state.gov/documents/organization/16290.pdf