

25. Diplomatic Bags and Couriers

The New Zealand Government attaches importance to the full observance of Article 27 of the VCDR and Article 35 of the VCCR covering communications, diplomatic/consular bags and diplomatic/consular couriers. Protocol Division is at all times willing to discuss with missions and posts any problems that may arise in this area.

25.1 Diplomatic Bags

In order to ensure that diplomatic bags are not opened or detained, the items constituting the diplomatic bag must be sealed, clearly marked as a diplomatic bag, and marked with an identification number or mark corresponding to that stated in the official document. All other mails and parcels addressed to the Missions/Posts and/or diplomatic/consular officers will be regarded as 'normal' mail.

If on inspection of the document there are any reasonable grounds for doubting the identity of the courier or legality of the contents of the diplomatic bag, it may be subjected to x-ray checks. If there are serious grounds to believe that a consular bag contains something other than the official correspondence, the New Zealand border authorities may request that the bag be opened in the presence of an authorised representative of the Post, or return the bag to its place of origin.

Any use of a diplomatic/consular bag or courier to import or export firearms, narcotic drugs or other items which would contravene New Zealand laws, would be regarded with the utmost seriousness.

Missions and posts are reminded of Article 41(1) of the VCDR and Article 55(1) of the VCCR on their obligation to comply with customs and quarantine requirements relating to the import and export of certain animals, plants and goods.

25.2 Tarmac Access

A mission or post should contact Protocol Division when seeking tarmac access using MFA612 in the first instance. Protocol Division will liaise with the Aviation Security Service and the mission/post on arrangements for tarmac access. Staff involved in this duty must comply with airport safety requirements at all times. High-visibility vests must be worn by all persons on the tarmac. These may be purchased from safety equipment suppliers.

25.3 Diplomatic Couriers

The correct and expeditious movement of diplomatic couriers and bags will be facilitated if they have proper identification and documentation. In accordance with aviation security requirements, couriers and their personal baggage are subject to normal security screening procedures.

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