1. **Difference between DPO and Diplomatic Pouch address**

The DPO address is just for STRI STAFF with MI STATUS to send and receive personal mail.

Diplomatic pouch address is available for scientific STAFF, students or employees from STRI to receive and send official mail from STRI. (For work purposes)

2. **What is the definition of Diplomatic Pouch?**

A diplomatic pouch is any properly identified and sealed package, pouch, envelope, bag or other container that is used to transport official correspondence, documents, and other articles intended for official use between embassies, legations, consular posts and foreign office of any government.

3. **Who can use the Diplomatic Pouch?**

The diplomatic pouch is available for scientific STAFF, students or employees from STRI to receive and send official mail from STRI. (For work purposes)

4. **Can I use the Diplomatic Pouch to receive personal packages?**

No, is prohibited. The diplomatic Pouch is just to receive packages that are related to your work.

5. **Can I send fund-raising materials via the Pouch for charity?**

No. Under international conventions, the diplomatic pouch may only be used for carrying official items between Washington and the Foreign Service Posts.

6. **What types of items are prohibited in the Diplomatic Pouch?**

Alcoholic beverages, animals, dry ice, flammable liquids, fragile items improperly packaged, light bulbs, liquids in excess of 16 oz., plants, seeds, bulbs, soil, fertilizer, plant food and batteries lithium metal or ion Polymer and sealed lead acid. Example Laptops, IPad, Kindles, IPhone, MP3 Players, cell phones, cameras and uninterruptible power supply.

**Note:** Only the following batteries are permitted: Alkaline, NiCad, NiMh and the small flat coin “button” watch-type batteries.

7. **What is the approximately time of transit in the Diplomatic Pouch?**

Approximately 3 to 5 weeks.

8. **What is the limit weight and dimension per box in the Diplomatic Pouch?**

Weight: 69 pounds and dimension: L 24 W 24 H 18 in inch per box. It can’t be more that 29” on the longest side. Several boxes to the same destination must need to send one box per week to avoid the bulk shipment.

9. **What happens if my package does not fit into the classified pouch?**
If your pouch is larger than 24 x 24 x 18 inches (6 cubic feet), it will not fit into the largest pouch bag and must be prepared as a crate pouch. Follow 14 FAH-4 H-214.1-1 {Crate} for instructions on preparing a crate pouch.

10. What is the process of shipping a large item or a number of items in the unclassified pouch?

A shipment is considered bulk if it equals or exceeds 6 cubic feet (approximately 5 single copy paper boxes [17.75” x 11.75” x 9“]) and is destined to the same addressee/household between pouch shipments. Bulk shipments are permitted in the pouch but transportation is funded by the customer.

If a shipment arrives at the Unclassified Pouch Facility and is considered to be bulk an email is sent to the addressee. The email provides a rough cost estimate for transportation and requests fiscal data (official) or refers addressee to freight forwarder to provide credit card information.

All automotive tires, single or multiple, are considered bulk and shipped at the customer’s expense.

11. What are dangerous goods?

Dangerous Goods are items that may endanger the safety of an aircraft or people on board the aircraft. Dangerous Goods are also known as restricted articles, hazardous materials and dangerous cargo. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) whose regulations are published by the International Air Transportation Association (IATA) or the local Civil Aviation Authority Regulations governs their carriage onboard aircraft. Many common items found in your household are considered dangerous goods for the purpose of air transport. These items require outside markings and, as such, are not permitted in the pouch.

12. What is the definition of Diplomatic Postal Office (DPO)?

A diplomatic post office is a postal facility that operates at one of the Department’s missions abroad as a branch post office of the USPS.

13. Can I use the DPO address to send official mail?

No, STRI have other addresses to send official mail.

14. If I don’t have MI STATUS and you send a package to the DPO, what would happen to my package?

The package will return to the sender. By the U.S. Embassy mail system.

15. What types of items are prohibited in the DPO?


16. What is the approximately time of transit in the DPO address?

Approximately two weeks.

17. What is the limit weight and dimension per box in the DPO address?

Weight: 69 Pounds and dimension: Girth less or equal to 130” inch.
18. Alternative addresses to receive official/personal mail?
Panamanian Postal Office, Air Box Express and Courier Companies. This will in incur additional shipping costs.

19. Alternative addresses for persons that don’t have MI STATUS and are interested in receiving personal packages?
Air Box Express and Courier Companies will incur additional shipping costs. (Further information contact the traffic section)

20. Where can I send bulk merchandise or Flammable liquids from other country to STRI or vice versa?
In these cases, the traffic department works with the company Action Forwarding (Consolidator Company) to coordinate the transportation of the merchandise by Airplane or Ship.

21. Which documents are very important to export samples by FedEx or DHL from STRI?
- Original Commercial invoice in English with the sender signature.
- Current original export Permit (contact the visitor office of STRI) with the stamp and three copies.
- Airway Bill from the Courier Company. (Documents in Traffic)
- Mailing Form.

22. What days are preferable for send perishable and nonperishable packages from Panama to other country?
Monday to Wednesday before 2:30 PM. In addition please inform Traffic before doing the shipment.

23. Which documents are very important to import perishable samples via Courier or Cargo Company to Panama?
- Send copy in advance of the airway bill and commercial invoice to the traffic department (trafico@si.edu)
- If you send samples with animal material, vegetable, marine, biologic, fossil, soil and derivative is necessary the current original import permit (contact the visitor office of STRI)
- If the merchandise requires dry ice, put in the airway bill, commercial invoice and outside the box that the merchandise need to be in a freezer when arrive.
- Extra Dry ice is always convenient.

24. Which documents are very important to import nonperishable samples via Courier or Cargo Company to Panama?
- Send copy in advance of the airway bill and commercial invoice to the traffic department (trafico@si.edu)
- If you send samples with animal material, vegetable, marine, biologic, fossil, soil and derivative is necessary the current original import permit (contact the visitor office of STRI)
25. How many days take the release of a package in the Panamanian customs?
Around 2 to 3 business days.

26. What day is preferable to send nonperishable items to Panama?
Any day of the week

27. What day is preferable for send perishable to Panama?
Friday

28. Which service can I use to send scientific samples in a preserving substance (Ethanol, Formalin)
FedEx and DHL accept samples in substances UN1170 (Ethanol), UN1198 (Formaldehyde), UN1987 (Ethyl Alcohol), UN1219 (Isopropanol) as long as IATA Special Provision A180 is met. Please go to http://131.104.97.143/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/IATA-Regulations.pdf for more information.

Please take note that is responsibility of the user to make sure that the package is properly wrapped according to the IATA SP A180 as a FedEx certified DG specialist will inspect the package before loading it in the plane. The Traffic section will not wrap the package for the user.

29. What is the maximum weight of dry ice to send perishable merchandise per box by FedEx or DHL?
According to Panamanian regulations shipments are generally recommended 2.27-4.54 KG of dry ice per 24 hours. However there is no limit to how much dry ice you can use (please be aware that the price increases with weight).

30. How many days take the transit of a package from Panama to U.S.A?
Will depend of the customs, if the package has all the documents that customs requires take approximately one day of transit.

31. How many days take the transit of a package from Panama to Europe?
It will depend of the customs, if the package has all the documents that customs requires takes approximately 3-4 days of transit.

32. What Courier Company offer overnight deliveries with envelopes from Panama to U.S.A.?
FedEx.

33. What are the procedures of the custom broker to release perishable and nonperishable packages in the Panamanian customs?
Once the custom broker is notified of the arrival of a shipment the custom broker proceed to ask Panamá Customs Office (Autoridad Nacional de Aduanas) for a special entry permit (Retiro Previo) to be able to pick up the shipment before STRI’s exoneration process is completed. For this a copy of the airway bill and the commercial invoice is needed.
Within the Panamanian Customs Office there are some departments that review STRI’s request for the entry permit, before the Custom’s Director signs the document. When it relates to reagents an extra day is needed because the paperwork must be reviewed by their laboratory. The procedure takes approx. 2-3 days, depending on Custom’s workload. Unfortunately, there is only one secretary that prepares all the permits. Please remember that all the embassies and their diplomatic staff, special organizations, and others ask for the same permit.

It is important to remember that once STRI is authorized the “Retiro Previo” the original airwaybill with the release stamp “Entreguese” is needed to be able to pick up the cargo.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

- See attached of the chemicals regulated from the Panamanian Law. (These specifics chemicals need special permit and processed by the Traffic Department. This process takes seven working days)
- Please don’t combine Perishable and nonperishable merchandise in the same shipment.

For questions please contact us to the email: trafico@si.edu

Related Links:

**Diplomatic Pouch Regulations:**


**DPO Regulations:**