

detained by Customs officers, the addressee shall be notified of the seizure or detention, of the reason for such action, and, if appropriate, of his right to petition for relief (see part 171 of this chapter).

### Subpart F—Exportation by Mail

#### § 145.71 Exportation from continuous Government custody.

(a) *Relief from duties.* Merchandise imported into the United States, unless nonmailable, may be exported by any class of mail without the payment of duties, if:

(1) The merchandise has remained continuously in the custody of the Government (Customs or postal authorities); and

(2) The mail articles containing such merchandise are inspected and mailed under Customs supervision.

(b) *Waiver of right to withdraw.* Waiver of the right to withdraw the mail article from the mails shall be endorsed on each mail article to be so exported and signed by the exporter.

(c) *Export entry or withdrawal required.* An export entry in accordance with § 18.25 of this chapter or a warehouse withdrawal for exportation in accordance with § 144.37 of this chapter, whichever is appropriate, shall be filed for merchandise being exported under this section, except for merchandise imported by mail which is either:

(1) Unclaimed or refused and being returned by the Postal Service to the country of origin as undeliverable mail; or

(2) For which a formal entry has not been filed and which is being remailed from continuous Customs or postal custody to Canada.

[T.D. 73-175, 38 FR 13369, May 21, 1973, as amended at 38 FR 17470, July 2, 1973; T.D. 78-102, 43 FR 14455, Apr. 6, 1978]

#### § 145.72 Delivery to Customs custody for exportation.

In certain cases where merchandise has not been in continuous Government custody, delivery to Customs custody is appropriate before exportation by mail, as set forth in the following sections of this chapter:

(a) Section 10.8 (articles exported for repairs or alterations).

(b) Section 10.9 (articles exported for processing).

(c) Section 148.33 (merchandise which was imported free of duty under a personal exemption, found to be unsatisfactory, and is being exported for replacement).

(d) Section 10.38 (exportation of imported merchandise which was entered temporarily under bond).

(e) Section 191.42 (exportation of rejected imported merchandise, with drawback of duties).

[T.D. 73-135, 38 FR 13369, May 21, 1973, as amended by T.D. 98-16, 63 FR 11005, Mar. 5, 1998]

#### POLICY STATEMENT TO PART 145—EXAMINATION OF SEALED LETTER CLASS MAIL

A. Customs officers and employees shall not open first class mail arriving in the U.S. Virgin Islands for delivery there, if it originated in the Customs territory of the United States, unless a search warrant or written authorization of the sender or addressee is obtained. Customs officers or employees may open and examine all other sealed letter class mail which is subject to the Customs mail regulations (see 19 CFR part 145) and which appears to contain matter in addition to, or other than, correspondence, provided they have “reasonable cause to suspect” the presence of merchandise or contraband.

B. Customs officers and employees shall not open any sealed letter class mail which appears to contain only correspondence unless a search warrant or written authorization of the sender or addressee is obtained in advance of the opening.

C. Customs officers and employees are prohibited from reading, or authorizing or allowing others to read, any correspondence contained in any letter class mail unless there has been obtained in advance either a search warrant or written authorization of the sender or addressee. This prohibition, which will continue to be strictly enforced, also applies to correspondence between school children and correspondence of the blind which are authorized to be mailed at other than the letter rate of postage in international mail.

D. If a violation of law is discovered upon opening any mail article referred to in paragraph C, and it is believed that the correspondence may provide additional information concerning the violation and is therefore needed for further investigation or use in court, a search warrant shall be obtained before any correspondence is seized, read, or referred to another agency. Search warrants shall be promptly sought. Correspondence

may be detained while a search warrant is being sought.

E. If no controlled delivery is arranged and correspondence is not to be otherwise seized pursuant to a search warrant (see “F” below), the item which constitutes the violation shall be removed and any correspondence shall be replaced in the wrapper, or in a new wrapper if the original wrapper has been seized pursuant to 19 U.S.C. 1595a. The wrapper shall then be resealed, marked to indicate it was opened by Customs, and returned to postal channels. Appropriate seizure notices shall be sent in accordance with 19 CFR 145.59(b).

F. No mail article may be referred to another agency without a search warrant unless—

(1) Any correspondence has been removed and the mail article is being referred for examination and clearance under 19 CFR 145.57,

(2) Any correspondence has been removed and the mail article has been lawfully seized by Customs,

(3) The mail article is being referred to Postal Service channels to effect a controlled delivery in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies, or

(4) The mail article is being returned to Postal Service channels for normal processing.

G. Whenever sealed letter class mail is opened, the factors giving the Customs officer or employee “reasonable cause to suspect” the presence of merchandise or contraband shall be recorded on the appropriate form and on the opened envelope or other container by means of appropriate coded symbols. Should a seizure result, these factors shall also be recorded on the seizure report.

H. Sealed letter class mail with the green Customs label on a Customs declaration may be opened without additional cause. Correspondence in such mail is subject to the restrictions regarding the detention, reading, and referral of mail to other agencies found in paragraphs C through F.

I. Whenever any sealed letter class mail is opened for any of the reasons set forth in the above paragraphs, a Postal Service employee shall be present and shall observe the opening.

J. Any violation of the Customs mail regulations or any of these policies will lead to appropriate administrative sanctions, as well as possible criminal prosecution pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 1702.

[T.D. 73-135, 38 FR 13369, May 21, 1973, as amended by T.D. 84-213, 49 FR 41185, Oct. 19, 1984]

#### APPENDIX TO PART 145

A. *Scope.* The Customs Service is authorized to examine, with certain exceptions for diplomatic and governmental mail, all mail

arriving from outside the Customs territory of the United States (CTUS) which is to be delivered within the CTUS, and all mail arriving from outside the U.S. Virgin Islands which is to be delivered within the U.S. Virgin Islands. The term “Customs territory of the United States” is limited to the States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Consequently, mail arriving from other U.S. territories and possessions is subject to Customs examination even though it is designated “domestic” mail for Postal Service purposes. Likewise, mail in the APO/FPO military postal system is subject to Customs examination, even though it also is designated “domestic” mail for Postal Service purposes. The Customs Service therefor is responsible for examining all international mail to be delivered in the CTUS and certain limited categories of so-called “domestic mail”.

B. *Definitions.* Under various international conventions and bilateral agreements, international mail falls within two main classes, Parcel Post and Postal Union mail.

Parcel Post is not permitted to contain correspondence but is to be used for the transmission of merchandise and is fully subject to Customs examination in the same manner as other merchandise shipments (e.g., luggage, cargo, containers, etc.). Postal Union mail is divided into “LC” mail (Lettres et Cartes) and “AO” mail (Aures Objets).

“LC mail consists of letters, packages paid at the letter rate of postage, post cards, and aerogrammes. The term “letter class mail” as used in the Customs Regulations and in this policy statement means “LC” mail as well as equivalent articles in “domestic” mail subject to Customs examination. Equivalent articles in “domestic” mail would include articles mailed at the letter rate, or equivalent class or category, in the APO/FPO military system or from a U.S. territory or possession outside the CTUS. Since the term “letter class mail” thus includes packages and bulky envelopes as long as they are mailed at the letter rate, or equivalent class or category, the restrictions relating to opening and reading of correspondence apply equally to such packages or bulky envelopes.

“AO” mail is to be treated in the same manner as Parcel Post mail since the Universal Postal Union Convention requires that they “be made up in such a manner that they may be easily examined” and generally are not permitted to “contain any document having the character of current and personal correspondence.” Exceptions to the latter requirement exist for matter for the blind and certain correspondence between school children. Because of these exceptions, the prohibition against reading correspondence without a search warrant or authorization of the