Port of Chicago - Pipeline

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Pipeline 12-10
August 14, 2012

TO: **Customhouse Brokers, Importers, and Others Concerned**

Subject: **Requirements for Importing and Processing Human Remains through a CBP Port of Entry.**

In an effort to proactively address the expedited release of human remains, CBP Headquarters has asked CBP Port Directors to:

- Ensure that the transporting carrier's cargo staff is aware of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirements for importation of human remains which can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/human-remains.html;
- Ensure the transporting carrier has a procedure for an alert from the foreign departure station identifying cargo shipments of human remains;
- Obtain release at the first U.S. port of arrival if possible, provided this will not delay an onward connection. If it is necessary to move the shipment in-bond, the transporting carrier at the in-bond origin port should alert airline cargo staff at the destination port to obtain release from CBP at the earliest time possible; and
- Ensure that the transporting air carrier immediately notifies the CDC when the required documentation is not available.

This guidance applies to human remains (i.e., the whole body or portion of the body of a deceased human being) intended for interment (e.g. burial or placement in a tomb) or subsequent cremation after entry into the United States.

There are **no requirements** for importation into the United States if human remains consist entirely of the following:

- clean, dried bones or bone fragments;
- human hair;
- teeth;
- fingernails or toenails;
- human remains that have been cremated before entry into the United States.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) requires ashes be carried in a temporary box of wood, light plastic or cardboard because urns are too dense to allow screeners to see the contents on an x-ray machine.

Human remains intended for interment or subsequent cremation after entry into the United States must be accompanied by a death certificate stating the cause of death. If the death certificate is in a language other than English, then it should be accompanied by an English language translation. If the cause of death was a quarantinable communicable disease, the remains must meet the standards for importation found in 42 CFR Part 71.55 and may be cleared, released, and authorized for entry into the United States only under the following conditions:

- The remains are cremated; or
- The remains are properly embalmed and placed in a hermetically sealed casket; or
- The remains are accompanied by a permit issued by the CDC Director. The CDC permit (if applicable) must accompany the human remains at all times during shipment.

Corpses, together with their coffins and accompanying flowers are exempt from duty. No formal entry is required.

Coffins not imported with human remains are dutiable.

There may be Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) concerns regarding the accompanying flowers. CBP Agriculture Specialists will make a determination of admissibility of any accompanying flowers. See information on entry of cut flowers title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 319.

If a casket bearing human remains is entered at a facility with Public Health Service Officers on site, Public Health usually provides a stamped release on the airway bill. CBP may then admit the casket and human remains without restriction.

Where Public Health Service Officers are not on site, CBP Officers will examine the death certificate to determine the cause of death and ensure that the remains are shipped in a leak proof container. A leak proof container is one that is puncture-resistant and sealed in a manner so as to contain all contents and prevent leakage of fluids during handling, storage, transport, or shipping.
CBP may immediately admit the remains unless the person died of a quarantined disease. If there is no evidence that the remains are embalmed and the casket, containing this category of remains, is hermetically sealed, CBP will hold the casket and contact the appropriate quarantine station for instructions.
A hermetically sealed container is one that is airtight and secured against the escape of microorganisms.

Should you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Gary Rosenthal, Program Manager, Cargo Control at (202) 344-2673. You can also contact Chief CBP Officer Brian Henke at (847) 928-3009.

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