

## Introduction

When a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer stops a traveler for a closer inspection, it does not necessarily mean that the traveler is suspected of any wrongdoing. In addition to enforcing homeland security related laws, CBP enforces hundreds of laws for other federal agencies.

Title 19, Section 1582 of the U.S. Code authorizes U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers and agriculture specialists to search, inspect and/or examine all persons, luggage and merchandise coming from a carrier arriving in the United States from a foreign destination.

Only a very small percentage of passengers smuggle drugs and other prohibited items into the United States of America. CBP is faced with the challenge of finding these few people among the millions of honest travelers entering the country. Through its enforcement examinations, CBP has seized tons of illegal items at airports, seaports, and land borders. This contraband would otherwise have ended up in local communities or affected America's agriculture.

## U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mission Statement

We are the guardians of our Nation's borders.  
We are America's front line.

We safeguard the American homeland at and beyond our borders.

We protect the American public against terrorists and the instruments of terror.

We steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States while fostering our Nation's economic security through lawful international trade and travel.

We serve the American public with vigilance, integrity and professionalism.



# A Look at the CBP Traveler Inspection Process



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20229

Please visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Web site at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)  
TO REPORT DRUG SMUGGLING  
1 (800) BE ALERT

CBP Publication No. 0000-0119  
Revised November 2006



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

## Inbound Examinations

There are two types of inspections that you may be selected for; one when you enter the country and the other is when you leave. The purpose of the inspection upon entry to the United States is to verify the information on the CBP declaration, which has been completed by you, the arriving international traveler, and to address any possible issues arising from it.

CBP is also responsible for apprehending individuals attempting to enter the United States illegally, stemming the flow of illegal drugs and other contraband; protecting our agricultural and economic interests from harmful pests and diseases; protecting American businesses from theft of their intellectual property; and regulating and facilitating international trade, collecting import duties, and enforcing U.S. trade laws.

CBP officers are also looking for a possible terrorist, terrorist weapons, or narcotics when they choose passengers for examination. This may result in having to undergo a personal search. However, there are many other reasons for a traveler to be referred for a secondary examination.

For example, CBP officers may determine if:

- You owe customs duty or other taxes;
- You have merchandise that you did not declare on your declaration;
- You have commercial merchandise;
- You have merchandise that may be considered prohibited or restricted.

## Outbound Examinations

The purpose of an inspection before leaving the United States is to inform passengers of their legal responsibility to file a Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) Form 105 when traveling with currency, or other monetary instruments in excess of \$10,000 out of the United States. CBP officers may choose passengers for an inspection for a variety of reasons and this may result in having to undergo a personal search. If selected for a personal search, your cooperation and understanding will be greatly appreciated.

### Why aren't all passengers inspected?

Although CBP officers have the authority under federal statutes to inspect everyone and everything entering or leaving the United States, there are two reasons why they do not. Most passengers are law-abiding travelers. CBP officers use random inspections to concentrate on finding those few passengers who are not obeying the law.

### Personal Search—What to expect during CBP examination

If you are selected for a personal search, there are a few things you need to know. You may not be searched on any discriminatory basis (e.g. race, gender, religion, ethnic background). A search based on consideration of citizenship or travel itinerary that includes a narcotics source or transit country is not discriminatory.

You should be treated in a courteous, professional, and dignified manner.

You will receive an explanation of the examination process as it occurs.

Unless probable cause has been developed, you can request that CBP notify someone of your delay if you are detained more than two hours after the personal search has begun.

## What can I do if I think the examination was not conducted in a professional manner?

If you feel that the examination was not conducted in a professional manner, ask to speak with a CBP supervisor immediately. A CBP supervisor is always available at the facility or by telephone. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that CBP officers treat all persons with dignity and that they behave in a professional manner.

The CBP processing facility you are in may also employ a CBP Passenger Service Representative (PSR). The PSR is a supervisor specifically trained to handle any concerns or questions you may have.

If you have any additional comments or questions, U.S. Customs and Border Protection wants to hear from you. You may write or call directly to CBP Headquarters at:

**Customer Service Center  
Office of Public Affairs  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20229  
1-877-CBP-5511**

You will receive a written response in a timely manner. If you provide your daytime phone number, CBP will contact you directly by telephone. You may also get information and provide feedback through the CBP Web site at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov).