

§ 92.39

or Territorial law digest, and in the absence of any special information from the attorney or other person requesting the document, the officer should prepare the certificate of authentication in the form which seems best suited to the needs of the case. When in his opinion the circumstances seem to warrant, and always in connection with certificates of marriage or divorce decrees, a consular officer should include in the body of his certificate of authentication a qualifying statement reading as follows: "For the contents of the annexed document I assume no responsibility."

§ 92.39 Authenticating foreign public documents (Federal procedures).

(a) A copy of a foreign public document intended to be used as evidence within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government of the United States must be authenticated in accordance with the provisions of section 1 of the act of June 25, 1948, as amended (sec. 1, 62 Stat. 948, sec. 92(b), 63 Stat. 103; 28 U.S.C. 1741). This provision of Federal law provides that a copy of any foreign document of record, or on file in a public office of a foreign country or political subdivision thereof, if certified, by the lawful custodian thereof, may be admitted in evidence when authenticated by a certificate of a United States consular officer resident in the foreign country, under the seal of his office.

(b) The consular officer's certificate should indicate that the copy has been certified by the lawful custodian.

(c) In the absence of a consular officer of the United States as an officer resident in the State of the Vatican City, a copy of any document of record or on file in a public office of said State of the Vatican City, certified by the lawful custodian of such document may be authenticated by a consular officer of the United States resident in Rome, Italy (22 U.S.C. 1204).

§ 92.40 Authentication of foreign extradition papers.

Foreign extradition papers are authenticated by chiefs of mission.

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§ 92.41 Limitations to be observed in authenticating documents.

(a) *Unknown seals and signatures.* A consular officer should not authenticate a seal and signature not known to him. See § 92.37(a) regarding the necessity for making a comparison with a specimen seal and signature.

(b) *Foreign officials outside consular district.* A consular officer should not authenticate the seals and signatures of foreign officials outside his consular district.

(c) *Officials in the United States.* Consular officers are not competent to authenticate the seals and signatures of notaries public or other officials in the United States. However, diplomatic and consular officers stationed at a United States diplomatic mission may certify to the seal of the Department of State (not the signature of the Secretary of State) if this is requested or required in particular cases by the national authorities of the foreign country.

(d) *Photostat copies.* Consular officers should not authenticate facsimiles of signatures and seals on photographic reproductions of documents. They may, however, authenticate original signatures and seals on such photographic reproductions.

(e) *Matters outside consular officer's knowledge.* A consular officer should not include in his certificate of authentication statements which are not within his power or knowledge to make. Since consular officers are not expected to be familiar with the provisions of foreign law, except in a general sense, they are especially cautioned not to certify that a document has been executed or certified in accordance with foreign law, nor to certify that a document is a valid document in a foreign country.

(f) *United States officials in foreign countries.* An authentication by a United States consular officer is performed primarily to cause the official characters and positions of foreign officials to be known and recognized in the United States. Consular officers should not, therefore, undertake to authenticate the seals and signatures of other United States officials who may be residing in their consular districts.