

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT or Department) is quite unique when compared to other Canadian government departments. Both the environment in which the Department operates and the departmental mandate have created this uniqueness.

Each day, the Department handles a large volume of correspondence and information, much of which is sensitive. It includes information given to us by foreign governments, other departments, businesses and industries, and individuals. It is important that this information be safeguarded.

The Department also possesses valuable assets, owns and leases chanceries or official residences, including staff quarters, vehicles, works of art and office equipment which are worth millions of dollars. Many Missions generate sizeable cash holdings and travel documents such as passports, visa foils and ministerial permits that require protection.

Canada's overseas programs are also at risk. Export programs are a key element of the Canadian economy and the loss of a major export sale or market because of a security breach can have severe consequences on the Canadian economy.

Often difficult to quantify, yet critical to a nation like Canada, are the "intangibles of state". Canada needs to maintain the trust of other states to ensure a free flow of information. Canada also needs to be able to gain access to and influence decision makers. Care therefore needs to be taken to avoid any suggestion that Canada's credibility is at risk from a security perspective.

The Department's concern for the safety of its employees and their dependants, who are living and working abroad in widely varying environments, many of which are demonstrably more dangerous than that prevailing in Ottawa, is one of the principal feature distinguishing the security policy of DFAIT from that of other Canadian departments and agencies which focus mainly on security of information issues.

NOTE: Security procedures may involve some inconvenience, but good common sense and an ounce of prevention are often all that is required to ensure the safeguards of information and assets, and your personal safety.