

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Secretary has asked me to reply on his behalf to your letter of June 4, concerning the use of "China" as the place of birth entry in U.S. passports issued to persons born on the island of Taiwan.

Since 1945, the place of birth in the passport of a U.S. citizen, whether born on Taiwan or on the Chinese mainland, has been entered as "China". As a general rule, the country of birth as it is currently known is written in the passport. Both the authorities in Taiwan and the government of the People's Republic of China take the position that Taiwan is part of China. We acknowledge that position, and our use of "China" as the place of birth in the U.S. passport, an official foreign policy document of the United States, accords with that acknowledgment.

Your letter also mentioned Ukraine and Palestine as examples of exceptions to the Department's place of birth policy. However, neither of these cases is analogous to the situation of Taiwan.

Before the recent changes in the former U.S.S.R., an applicant could request Ukraine as the place of birth in the passport. Ukraine, unlike Taiwan, had a seat in the General Assembly of the United Nations in its own right. To the extent that this status accorded Ukraine attributes of sovereignty, our practice was consistent with the Department's policy on place of birth entries in the U.S. passport.

The Honorable
Stephen J. Solarz,
Chairman,
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs,
House of Representatives.

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For complex historical reasons that are peculiar to the region, "Palestine" may, upon request, be entered as the place of birth in passports issued to applicants born prior to 1948 in what is today Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. As to those citizens born in 1948 or after, however, the Department's policy is that the place of birth must be Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip.

Finally, all persons born abroad, including those who object to the use of "China" as the place of birth entry, may request that the city or town of their birth be shown as the place of birth in their passport. However, in such cases, applicants are cautioned that the use of this option may entail delay or other difficulties when traveling to, or obtaining visas for entry into, certain foreign countries.

Sincerely,

Janet G. Mullins
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

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CA/PPT/C:WCrawford:atb
6/12/92, 3578j
Rev'd:WBWharton, 6/17/92
Rev'd:SPalmer-Royston, 7/17/92

Clearances:
CA/PPT:WLCamp
CA:JWard
EAP/RATC:HTroutman
L/EAP:JHergen
INR/GE/CAG:BThomas,WLHezlep
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