

Driving Topics

[Cars/Autos](#)

[Driver Behavior](#)

[Driver Safety](#)

[Driving](#)

[Enforcement](#)

[Environment](#)

[Licensing](#)

[Technology](#)

[Traffic and drivers](#)

[Training for drivers](#)

[Travel and Driving](#)

[Driving Jobs](#)

Other Info

[Drivers Bookstore](#)

[Driver Resources](#)

[Drivers Newsletter](#)

[Advertise](#)

Travel

[Travel and Driving](#)

[International Drivers Handbooks](#)

Diplomats ignore London's congestion road tolls

Former London Mayor Ken Livingstone caused some gasps in the British media when he called U.S. ambassador Robert Tuttle a "a chiseling little crook" over his refusal to pay the congestion-fighting road toll Livingstone introduced about 5 years ago.

The U.S. embassy, it seems, has a backlog of almost \$4 million in unpaid tolls and Tuttle, along with some other ambassadors, is claiming the toll is a tax from which his embassy is exempted under a [Vienna treaty](#) on diplomatic relations. About 40 other embassies are also refusing to pay, according to a U.S. embassy spokesperson.

The Japanese embassy is second on the list, racking up more than \$2.6 million in outstanding fees. A 2006 list from the London Mayor's office showed other top offenders as Angola, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, South Africa and Kenya. One [source](#) calculated that since July 2005, American diplomats have made an average of 350 car trips into London every day, racking up some \$1.6 million in unpaid congestion fees.

The issue of scofflaw diplomats has long been a hot one around the world. A [2006 study](#) of New York parking tickets issued to diplomats attempted to link the number of unpaid tickets to levels of corruption in the diplomats' home countries.

Economists Raymond Fisman of Columbia University and Edward Miguel of the University of California, Berkeley examined data on more than 150,000 unpaid parking tickets in issued to cars with diplomatic license plates in New York City between 1997 and 2002.

Their results, they concluded, indicate a direct relationship between diplomats' accumulation of parking tickets and levels of corruption in their countries. The study abstract states:

"We find strong persistence in corruption norms: diplomats from high corruption countries (based on existing survey-based indices) have significantly more parking violations, and these differences persist over time. In a second main result, officials from countries that survey evidence indicates have less favorable popular views of the United States commit significantly more parking violations, providing non-laboratory evidence on sentiment in economic decisionmaking."

The study found that diplomats in countries with low corruption ratings, such as Norway, tended to obey rules regardless of whether enforcement levels were high or not. ☺