DTMO is working to outline a strategy and course of action for providing travel services in the future. With our partners, we are exploring leading practices and innovations within the travel industry and looking for opportunities to adapt these practices to the Department of Defense environment.

We cannot transform the Defense Travel Enterprise alone. Please let us know what would improve your travel experience; email your ideas to nextgen@dtmo.pentagon.mil.

-Pam Mitchell
Director, DTMO
Currency fluctuations can affect both Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) and Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) payments. Military finance centers pay all allowances in U.S. Dollars, but many expenses for Service members stationed overseas require local currency. When exchange rates change, overseas allowances are adjusted to ensure that the Service member has the same purchasing power when using foreign currency.

Because exchange rates cannot be predicted, the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) monitors daily exchange rates using a Currency Adjustment model. It compares the current pay system exchange rate, used by military finance centers for allowances, to the currency exchange rate. Exchange rates are reviewed twice a month for appropriate adjustments to ensure that neither the Service member nor the government is disadvantaged over time by fluctuating exchange rates.

Secretarial approval by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) or the Services is not required to implement a currency adjustment. When an adjustment is made, it is automatically included in the member's next paycheck. Currency adjustments may result in an increase, decrease, or no change to the COLA index and OHA. Adjustments are made in the same manner whether the dollar is increasing or decreasing in value. The changes in allowances are posted to the DTMO website one day prior to the effective date. Because adjustments are made only once per pay period, the pay system exchange rate will generally not be the same as the exchange rate at the bank.

For COLA, changes to the pay system exchange rate adjust the index for most foreign locations so that purchasing power using foreign currency remains the same. COLA is adjusted for only the portion of the index for which local purchases are made. Those purchases made in U.S. Dollars are not adjusted for currency fluctuation.

To help Service members understand how currency fluctuations affect COLA payments, DTMO has created a video. This video, and other COLA communication toolkit products, can be found on the DTMO website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Sections/COLA.cfm. Service members can calculate their COLA payment by using the COLA Calculator also located on the DTMO website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/rateinfo.html. The calculator computes the member’s daily COLA rate and semi-monthly payment which is updated with the current COLA amounts each pay-period.

For OHA, the allowance is generally set in local currency. Military finance offices use the pay system exchange rate to convert the local currency (based on the OHA allowance permitted) to U.S. Dollars. Payments for OHA are based on number of dependents, permanent duty station, grade, and rent payments for privately leased quarters. Service members can calculate their OHA payment by using the OHA Query tool also located on the DTMO website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/ohaform.html.
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**Travel Alert: Using Your Government Travel Charge Card in Europe**

DoD personnel traveling in Europe have encountered problems when trying to make purchases using the Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC). Retail cashiers claim that European credit card machines are designed for chip-and-PIN technology and unable to read the magnetic strip on the back of the GTCC. While this is not true, cardholders traveling abroad need to know what to do to ensure a smooth, successful transaction.

It is true that almost all European card issuers and merchants have converted cards and equipment to chip-and-PIN technology; however, any retailer that accepts Visa and MasterCard is required to comply with international standards that require merchant acceptance of magnetic strip cards. This means that chip-and-PIN machines are still capable of accepting the magnetic strip cards issued and used in the United States. When a cashier initiates the transaction, the machine prompts will direct him/her on how to proceed with the transaction so that the machine can print a receipt for signing by the customer.

So, what should cardholders abroad do if told by a retail establishment their card cannot be accepted? Politey ask the cashier to swipe the card in the chip-and-PIN machine and follow the prompts it provides for completing the transaction. If the cashier refuses your request, ask to speak to a supervisor or manager. A manager should be aware of the compliance requirement and ready to help complete the transaction.

For more information, please contact Citi customer service at 1-800-200-7056 (collect 757-852-9076).

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**Government Travel Charge Card Customer Service**

Citi Customer Service
1-800-200-7056 (collect 757-852-9076)
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Citi’s DoD Travel Card Webpage
www.transactionservices.citigroup.com

**All other GTCC Transaction Questions**

Travel Assistance Center
1-888-Help 1 Go
DSN:312-564-3950
www.defensetravel.dod.mil/passport
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
The DTS issues encountered last fall caused the Department to reassess and reformulate the strategy for DTS. As a result, the focus has shifted to focusing on system stability, which includes resolving known system problems, especially those involving internal server errors (ISEs), Import/Export functionality, and functional System Problem Reports (SPRs), incrementally transitioning our old code, and improving usability. Only after this steady state has been achieved will additional functionality be added incrementally.

To stabilize the system, several software updates will be implemented over the next few months. In doing this, the Department will incrementally launch updates to designated sites. This process, known as a “soft launch,” minimizes impact to the user by identifying and resolving issues before launching the update to the entire system.

Information about upcoming software updates, including system downtime, will be posted in the “Notices” section of the DTS homepage and also on the DTMO and TraX websites.

It is important for travelers to ensure that Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) information in their DTS user profile is accurate. When a GTCC expires or is reissued, the new number and/or expiration date must be updated in the system.

To view GTCC information in DTS, create a local voucher. On the Non-Mileage Expense screen, select Additional Options (see step #1) on the light blue navigation bar. When the Comments for Local Voucher appear, select Profile on the dark blue navigation bar (see step #2). On the My Profile screen, select My Account Information (see step #3). Here you may view or adjust your Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and GTCC information. To save changes to the current document, select Update Personal Information (see step #4) or you may save changes to your permanent DTS profile by checking the box next to Save changes to permanent travel information (see step #5).

If you are unable to log into DTS, contact your Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) to update your profile.
Are you taking advantage of all the travel resources that are just one click away? The DoD Travel Explorer (TraX) offers quick access to travel information, training and travel assistance. If you have a Common Access Card (CAC) you can log in to access trip tools, training resources, and a Knowledge Center with over 500 answers to frequently asked travel-related questions.

Do you need to plan a trip? TraX offers traveler tools to aid in travel planning that range from access to GSA City Pair rates, location reports, and maps to a comprehensive trip calculator to assist in estimating travel costs.

Do you need to submit a help ticket to the Travel Assistance Center (TAC)? TraX provides assistance to the DoD traveler as an extension of the TAC. The Help Tickets icon allows help tickets to be submitted, processed, and tracked while TAC representatives conduct research, or search and review responses to previously submitted questions.

Do you need travel training? The Training section on TraX provides access to all travel training currently offered by DTMO. This section not only provides users access to training courses, it also retains training schedules and documentation.

Would you like to know what’s new in DoD travel? The Announcements section provides the latest information on additional training opportunities, updates to the DTS, and more. Additionally, the TAC holds Outreach Calls that are designed to inform the DoD travel community about pertinent issues and topics. Check the Announcements section for the latest schedule and instructions on participating. Travelers can also subscribe to the Defense Travel Dispatch and Customer Service Notifications (CSNs) by using the Subscription feature on TraX.

To access TraX, visit the DTMO website or www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Passport.

Recent Enhancements to TraX Functionality

- **Simplified Per Diem Data**
  Users can simply enter a city, city/state, or country combination to find per diem rates instead of searching a long list of countries, states, and cities. Additionally, TraX automatically selects the per diem based on the dates of the trip entered so users do not have to worry about selecting the correct seasonal rate.

- **Defense Table of Distance (DTOD) Interface**
  TraX now interfaces with the DTOD so travelers can calculate mileage, as well as get driving directions.

- **Save/Share/Email Trip Estimate Capability**
  Users can now email or print a PDF version of trip estimates or simply save it to review/edit in the future. This new functionality also allows users to create a trip estimate, forward it to another TraX user to update or tailor for their own use.

- **Redesigned Trip Calculator**
  The new, clean look of the Trip Calculator makes navigation more user friendly. After entering a location, TraX will display the weather for that location and additional buttons to view travel alerts and maps.

- **Improved Look-Up Feature in Location Reports**
  Users can simply type in a location instead of searching by country, state, and city to find a location report.
Defense Connect Online Offers a Greener Way to Conduct Business

Perhaps you need to schedule a business meeting in San Antonio, but you’re located in San Diego, or you are required to brief in Washington D.C. and you are stationed in Germany. Geographical distance, great or small, can present a challenge when coordinating an in-person meeting. While a price cannot be placed on a handshake or face-to-face dialogue with participants, tools such as Defense Connect Online (DCO), the Defense Department’s online collaboration tool, can help you complete your mission successfully while conserving travel funds and reducing your carbon footprint.

DCO, offered by the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), is a commercially-available virtual meeting software program that allows you to present briefings or other visual materials in real-time—without having to be in the same location as your audience. DCO provides an audio capability for the presenter and participants which, when coupled with the ability to display presentation material real-time, provides a live atmosphere for your meeting.

For nearly a year, DTMO has successfully used DCO to deliver Distance Learning sessions. Until recently, DCO was accessible only to those holding a DoD CAC. Under new policy, government employees with government e-mail addresses who are sponsored by CAC holders can take advantage of DCO’s tools, which include Web conferencing, chat, video, application and desktop sharing, and voice-over-IP capabilities.

Leveraging this technology offers an alternative to travel that is both environmentally friendly and can result in a substantial savings—both in time and money to you, your organization and meeting participants. For additional information on DCO, visit www.dco.dod.mil.

TSA Begins Expansion of Explosive Trace Detection

Airline travelers may now experience extra screening in security lines and near checkpoints of airports as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) begins to screen passengers for the presence of potential explosive residue using Explosive Trace Technology (ETD) equipment.

After the attempted airline attack on Christmas Day 2009, TSA piloted ETD technology at five airports within security checkpoints to screen passengers’ hands and carry-on luggage. ETD detectors are portable; so that screeners can easily move throughout airports allowing security officers to swab a piece of luggage or passengers’ hands to detect small amounts of explosives. “Explosive Trace Detection technology is a critical tool in our ability to stay ahead of evolving threats to aviation security,” said TSA’s Acting Administrator Gale Rossides. Less invasive than full body scanners, the random use of these mobile detectors at airports nationwide is expected to provide an additional layer of security.

Because screens will be conducted randomly, passengers should not expect to see the same practices at every airport or each time they travel. For additional information about TSA’s use of ETD, visit www.tsa.gov.

An average three-day TDY from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles, which incorporates air, rental car and hotel stay, would emit 945 pounds of greenhouse gases.
Defense Travel Administrators (DTAs) are a vital part of the travel process. They work with travelers, authorizing officials, travel managers and act as a local support point of contact. A DTA’s site mission responsibilities may include program management and program leadership responsibilities.

Understanding your role and responsibilities, coupled with continued training, are key to DTA success. It is important to have an ongoing training strategy that encourages sustained training, as well as communicating information about training opportunities to travel administrators and travelers.

Whether you serve as a DTA, Lead DTA, Organizational or Finance DTA, ongoing training for you and your travelers is available through a variety of venues. Your Service or Agency may offer training tailored to local business procedures. DTMO recommends that all DTAs initially complete a three to five day comprehensive onsite training that can be coordinated with your Service or Agency. This training offers an excellent initial introduction, but continued learning is just as important. Many organizations already have an excellent “blended or triangle” approach to continuing travel program education within their units. This type of training is the most effective way to ensure your travel program includes local business procedures and guidance.

DTMO offers additional training resources for DTAs such as web-based training, Distance Learning classes, demonstrations, and classroom training resources for instructors. Training resources can be accessed through TraX. To view all available training, select “Training” in the top menu bar, then select “View All.” Additional information, including a short summary of training resources, is available by searching for ID numbers 628, 635, and 792 in the Knowledge Center search box.

Maximizing DTA Knowledge is an Ongoing Practice
2010 DTA Seminar Deemed a Success

Over 450 Defense Travel Administrators (DTAs) attended the first of the 2010 DTA Seminars last month in Alexandria, Virginia. DTAs from around the world had the opportunity to network with peers, while learning the latest information on DoD travel, the Defense Travel System (DTS), and travel-related training topics.

Ms. Pam Mitchell, Director of the DTMO, opened the seminar with a presentation that outlined the organization’s key initiative, Defense Travel Transformation. Ms. Mitchell was followed by a short presentation on navigating change. It challenged DTAs to become part of the transformation process by providing innovative ideas and being change agents. “The seminar was the perfect opportunity to ask DTAs for assistance in helping us transform travel across the Department. We know that DTAs have good ideas and we look forward to hearing what they have to say,” said Ms. Mitchell.

Other guest speakers included Mr. David Swatloski from the Business Transformation Agency (BTA), who serves as the DTS Program Director. Mr. Swatloski outlined the way forward for DTS, defining its steady state, and explaining efforts such as expanding program oversight and improving testing.

Of particular interest to attendees was the guest speaker, Mr. Norman Rose, who is regarded as one of the country’s leading travel experts and has authored several books on the travel industry. Mr. Rose discussed how travel trends, such as social media and smartphone technologies, will be used to book, pay and report travel expenses in the future. He noted that when DTS was launched, it was ahead of its time and led the way for travel systems that are used today.

Seminar attendees also took advantage of the number of specialized breakout sessions which offered detailed information on topics such as: Debt Management Monitor, Maximizing DTS Reports, Using Defense Connect Online to Enhance Training, Government Travel Charge Card, as well as Commercial Travel Office Operations. In response to feedback from last year’s seminar, DTMO added roundtable sessions where attendees had the chance to gather more information on a specific topic and talk with a subject matter expert.

Participants were encouraged to interact with the presenters, ask questions, and share information with other attendees, which they did with enthusiasm. Rich Mohammed from USMC Tampa Main Forces, Central Command said, “This was truly a positive learning experience. There were a lot of good sessions with knowledgeable personnel.”

New to this year’s seminar were the Excellence in Practice awards. Presented by Ms. Vee Penrod, Principal Director for Military Personnel Policy and Ms. Pam Mitchell, the awards went to those organizations and individuals whose travel programs are among the most successful.

Registration is open for the second 2010 DTA Seminar, which will be held from June 8 – 10 in Denver, Colorado. Due to the overwhelming interest in these seminars, DTMO is planning to expand the 2011 seminar schedule to include an overseas location. For more information about the 2010 Seminar in Denver or future events, please visit the DTMO website, www.defensetravel.dod.mil.
Congratulations to the 2010 DTA Seminar—Alexandria Excellence in Practice Award Winners

New to this year’s DTA Seminar were the Excellence in Practice awards. Presented by Ms. Vee Penrod, Principal Director for Military Personnel Policy and Ms. Pam Mitchell, Director, DTMO, the awards went to those organizations and individuals whose travel programs are among the most successful. Congratulations to all of the winners from the Alexandria, Virginia 2010 DTA Seminar!

The Elite: Team Excellence in Customer Service Award
US Navy Recruiting Command DTS Team
Millington, Tennessee

The Elite is awarded to a “local help desk” team who demonstrates commitment to high standards of customer service, both through personal dealings with customers and by contributing to the overall customer care policy through their involvement in communications, problem solving, and innovation. The US Navy Recruiting Command DTS Team provides creative and timely solutions for their help desk support, headquarters travel support and reaches across two Regions and 26 Navy Recruiting Districts.

The Champion: Best Mentor and Coach Award
Jill Glando, Lead DTA Travel Support Branch,
USMC, Quantico

The Champion is awarded to a Lead Defense Travel Administrator (LDTA) whose wisdom, guidance, and devotion to their Organizational DTAs is clearly evident through results. Mentoring includes a customer service training program, training initiative, and/or staff development that leads to an improvement in customer service delivery and experience. Communications, program delivery, and measured results are other elements that are considered.

The Icon: Excellence in Travel Program Guidance and Communication
266th Financial Management Center, US Army Europe

The award goes to a military service major command or defense agency team that has successfully directed travel initiatives and communicated system usage topics with exemplary professional skill. The team must have facilitated a visible enhancement in travel program capabilities for its subordinate sites. DTMO’s most prestigious honor, the Icon acknowledges the very highest level of achievement and is considered to be the “best of the best.” The 266th team supports travel, communication and training to seven different Army Commands, two Joint Commands, NATO and multiple DoD Agencies.
Often, compensation and allowance issues are difficult to understand. Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) is one such allowance, not only because it fluctuates, but also because it is often misperceived as means for maintaining a certain quality of life while stationed overseas. To help clarify, DTMO recently launched a communications campaign designed to increase awareness and understanding of Overseas COLA and provide commanders and trainers with a toolkit to use when communicating about Overseas COLA.

Overseas COLA is a non-taxable, supplemental allowance designed to offset the higher overseas prices of non-housing goods and services so that Service members living overseas can afford to purchase the same level of goods and services as their counterparts stationed in CONUS. It is not only based on a comparison of the prices of goods and services overseas and those on average in CONUS, but varies for each military member from location to location. This is due to the differences in the shopping amenities available, amount of purchases made on-base versus off-base, and local prices.

Relying on COLA can have a financial impact on service members. It can fluctuate from paycheck to paycheck. The actual COLA payment is based on rank, years of service and number of dependents. It is also adjusted for the current exchange rate on the day in which it is paid.

Service members can learn more about COLA by reviewing the COLA toolkit on the DTMO website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Sections/COLA.cfm. The toolkit contains several videos and communication products that explain the key elements of the allowance, as well as a link to a calculator that computes COLA payments at any given time.
A Commercial Travel Office (CTO) services task order has been awarded for those stationed in Europe to assist travelers with reservations for air, rail, ground transportation, and lodging.

In February, Tzell-AirTrak Travel Group was selected to provide travel management services for approximately 40 Army, Air Force, and DoD Agency locations throughout Europe. The task order is valued at ~$6.4 million. Planned implementation will be in phases based upon current contract and Memorandum of Understanding expiration dates during the second quarter, FY2010. This is the eighth of 11 task orders that have been awarded under DoD’s Worldwide Commercial Travel Offices Service Contract.

This task order is a key part of DTMO’s initiative to consolidate CTO services for the Department. The anticipated benefits of this consolidation include standardizing CTO services requirements, capturing quality performance measures, and reducing contract administration costs.

Are You Earning Your Frequent Flyer Miles?

With the implementation of TSA’s Secure Flight Program, airlines, rental car companies, and some hotels now require that the name on the reservation exactly match the name on any Frequent Flyer/user accounts in order for travelers to earn credit. When making reservations in DTS, travelers are asked to verify or add their name as it appears on the state or federal government issued identification that the traveler plans to use at airport security, as well as date of birth and gender. Because DTS automatically pre-populates reservations with the name that is in your DTS profile, travelers may find that the name on the reservation is not the same as what is registered for frequent flyer/user accounts. To earn credit toward these accounts, travelers should ensure that the name that appears on the frequent flyer/user account is the same as the name in their DTS profile.

To add a frequent flyer/user number to your DTS profile:
1. Open a document and Select "Additional Options" from the light blue navigation bar
2. Select "Profile" from top navigation bar
3. Select "My Preferences"
4. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and select "Rewards Programs"
5. Select the Program Type and update/enter the frequent flyer/user number.
6. Click select "Save Permanent" to permanently save to your profile.

Travel Assistance Center
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
1-888-Help1Go
DSN: 312-564-3950
(Oversaes) DSN or 1-809-463-3376
(wait for the beep), then dial 1-888-Help1Go
www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Passport
Contact your local help desk for local business rules.

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