

# Defense Travel Dispatch

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*The DoD Center for Travel Excellence*



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As you may have noticed, this edition is our spring edition. For those avid Dispatch readers, no, you didn't miss an edition. We realized that somehow we were out of sync with the seasons in which we published our newsletter. To fix this, we named this edition our spring edition, instead of the winter. While we may have skipped the winter edition in name, we still continue to publish the Dispatch quarterly.

As always, I encourage you to use the many resources available to keep abreast of Defense travel. For travel assistance or service-specific guidance, contact your DTA or your local help desk. You can also contact the Travel Assistance Center or visit TraX, which has links to training and a Knowledge Center where you can search hundreds of FAQs on a variety of travel topics. And, don't forget about our website, [www.defensetravel.dod.mil](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil), where you can find a wealth of information on our programs, access a resource library, and find links to helpful tools such as the travel regulations, allowance calculators, and much more.

— Pam Mitchell  
Director, DTMO

#### *About the Defense Travel Management Office*

*The Defense Travel Management Office was established to serve as the single focal point for commercial travel within the Department of Defense to establish strategic direction, set policy, and centrally manage commercial travel programs and station/housing allowances.*

*DTMO maintains central oversight for commercial travel management, travel policy and implementation, customer support and training, DoD travel charge card program management, functional oversight of the Defense Travel System, and allowance and entitlement program management.*

# The 2012 NDAA and the Future of Defense Travel



The Office of the Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness (P&R) initiated a major legislative reform enacted in the 2012 NDAA—title 37, Chapter 8, Consolidation and Reform of Travel and Transportation Authorities. The new legislation allows the DoD to comprehensively transform travel – law, policy, and process. Transforming travel will simplify rules for the traveler, reduce outlays for the Department, increase mission flexibility for leaders, and leverage capabilities of the travel industry to respond to changes in technology and the market. These authorities

enable the Secretary of Defense, and other Administering Secretaries, to promulgate more flexible, less complicated travel regulations and to conduct pilot programs that provide a test environment to evaluate innovative programs, policies and technologies. Successful implementation of our travel transformation efforts will result in a greater experience for the traveler and will help reduce the cost of doing business.

Transformation is a long-term effort that will be enacted over many years. However, there are also some things you will see sooner:

- A prototype compliance application for the electronic verification of travel claims
- A travel simplification model and framework for future travel allowances and business rules

- “Fast track” policy and process simplification changes that will not immediately impact the travel system
- Consolidation of uniformed and civilian travel regulations (i.e., JTR and JFTR)
- Transformation of some travel programs—for example:
  - Analyze existing DoD lodging programs, determine opportunities for improvements, and develop strategy for central management and strategic sourcing
  - Pilot use of electronic receipts
- A plan for processing all travel claims electronically by end of 2016
- Identification and implementation of some travel efficiencies —for example:
  - Tax exemption from state and local taxes
  - Exploring opportunities to reduce cost per trip (e.g., TDY greater than 30 days, standard TDY while enroute)
  - Strategically sourcing, to include bundling of amenities

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# Common DTS Errors

Awareness, training, and administrative diligence are key to addressing most DTS errors. Below are the most common errors that travelers make in DTS, which offers insight into what Authorizing Officials (AO) should be looking for when approving documents.



- Duplicate Expenses.** Many travelers add certain items as a reimbursable expense when they are already being reimbursed for these expenses on a different screen in DTS. The most common duplicate expenses are for lodging, airfare, rental car, and Commercial Travel Office (CTO) fees. When travel reservations are made through DTS, the system automatically enters the cost for airfare, CTO fees, and the rental car cost to the voucher. For example, travelers often claim airfare or rental car expenses on the non-mileage expense screen when it is already listed as a transportation expense. Further, lodging should never be entered as a reimbursable expense unless it is a dual lodging cost; it is already being reflected on the per diem screen.
- Outside CONUS Laundry Expenses Reimbursed.** Laundry is only an authorized reimbursable expense when travel is within CONUS. Outside CONUS (including Alaska, Hawaii, and US territories), laundry is included in the incidental expense portion of per diem and is not separately reimbursable.
- Lodging Taxes Reimbursed for Hotels in Foreign Locations.** Lodging taxes are only an authorized reimbursable expense within CONUS and non-foreign OCONUS locations (including Alaska, Hawaii, and US territories). In foreign locations, lodging taxes are computed in the maximum lodging per diem rate, and must be added to the daily lodging rate claimed on the per diem screens in DTS. Travelers may not be reimbursed more than the maximum locality rate for lodging for the combined cost of the room plus daily taxes unless the AO has approved Actual Expense Authorization.
- Lodging Incurred While “In Transit.”** Many travelers enter lodging as a reimbursable expense for days that are shown as *In Transit* in DTS. *In Transit* can only exist on days when travelers are actually traveling overnight and not for those days when travelers spend the night in lodging. If DTS shows a traveler as *In Transit* on a night when they incur a lodging expense, the traveler must amend the itinerary to show where they spent the night, and enter the lodging cost on the per diem screen. Otherwise, they will not receive the correct per diem rate and will be either under- or overpaid.



In accordance with the 2012 NDAA, DTMO will develop a travel policy compliance program within the next year. The program will include an application that will identify errors in DTS travel documents and automatically notify travelers and administrators so corrective action can be taken.

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- **Baggage Tips.** Uniformed members may be reimbursed for baggage handling tips for personal baggage at terminals but not at lodging establishments. Both civilian employees and uniformed members can be reimbursed tips for handling government property at both transportation terminals and lodging establishments. Civilian employees may be reimbursed for baggage handling tips for personal baggage only when they have a disability or special need, when dependents are traveling unaccompanied at government expense without per diem, or for dependent's baggage that they cannot carry when dependents are traveling accompanied by the sponsor.
- **Other Tips.** The only other tips that may be reimbursed are for transportation such as taxis or shuttles. All other tips for maids, doormen, concierges, and meals are part of per diem and are not separately reimbursable.
- **Rental Car Insurance.** Insurance for rental cars in the US is not reimbursable. It is only reimbursable in a foreign country when the appropriate authority determines that the local law requires it.
- **Rental Car Upgrades.** Unless an Authorizing Official determines that there is a need for a rental car upgrade, neither the cost of the upgrade nor any additional taxes for the cost of the upgrade are reimbursable.

# New Documentation Required for Other Than Economy/Coach Class Transportation

DoD policy requires economy/coach-class travel accommodations to be used for all official government travel, unless the Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class (i.e., premium class) fare is cheaper.



Transportation using Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class at government expense is permitted on an exception-only basis when fully justified and approved by the appropriate premium class authority, as stated in the Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR) and Joint Travel Regulations (JTR). It is the traveler's responsibility to receive proper approval for Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class travel.

As of April 1, 2012, the JFTR and JTR Appendix H will require an Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class Transportation Approval Checklist to be submitted as part of the approval process. The checklist certifies that all decision factors and other alternatives were considered prior to approval of Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class Transportation. The Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class checklist must be certified by the appropriate Authorizing Officials (AO) and submitted as part of the supporting approval documentation. AOs should check local business rules for information on using this form.

A Commercial Travel Office (CTO) will not issue Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class Transportation tickets without proper authorization. Additionally, CTOs must report the issuance of Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class tickets in accordance with applicable commercial travel contracts.

For additional information regarding Other Than Economy-/Coach-Class Transportation, contact your Transportation Office for assistance. To access the JFTR/JTR Appendix H, go to <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/travelreg.cfm>.

# TSA Tests Pre✓™ Program for Service Members

In March, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) expanded its trusted traveler program known as Pre✓™ to Service members flying out of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). Service members including drilling Reservists, National Guardsmen, and members of the Coast Guard who present a valid Common Access Card (CAC) at security checkpoints will receive expedited security screening.

To participate, members must go to the TSA Pre✓™ lane at the security checkpoint in terminal B (gates 10-22), and present their CAC to a TSA officer who will scan the card to verify their status. Once verified by the Department of Defense (DoD), members will no longer be required to remove their shoes, outerwear, belts, laptops and any small liquid containers from carry-ons when going through security.

Eligible Service members do not need to be on official travel or be in uniform to take advantage of TSA Pre✓™ program. Also, family members ages 12 and under traveling with an eligible member can process through expedited screening.

While this program offers expedited screening for members, TSA plans to continue applying random and unpredictable screening measures as part of the agency's layered approach to prevent terrorists from "gaming" the system.

The program is expected to be expanded to members flying out of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) and to Atlanta-Hartsfield International Airport in the upcoming months.

TSA hopes to expand the Pre✓™ program to DoD Service members and civilians at airports across the country in the future.

For more information on TSA's Pre✓™ program, visit [http://www.tsa.gov/what we do/rbs\\_dod.shtm](http://www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/rbs_dod.shtm).

According to the Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR) and the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), the standard size vehicle for all official travel is a compact car. However, when a compact car does not meet mission requirements, an Authorizing Official (AO) can approve a larger size or hybrid vehicle.

## Booking A Larger Rental Car

It is up to the organization to determine if a larger size vehicle is warranted. The regulation does not address the number of people required for a larger size vehicle such as a SUV. The U.S. Government Rental Car Agreement allows government employees traveling together on official government business to be additional drivers and they are not required to be listed on the rental contract.

An AO may authorize larger vehicles to accommodate special circumstances such as the height of an individual or excess official luggage (e.g., test equipment, supplies, etc.). Booking a vehicle other than a compact car will require a justification.

Not all rental car companies' participating locations offer larger size vehicles. Please go to <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/rental.cfm> to review the rental car ceiling rate charts to determine if a particular vehicle size is available under the Rental Car Agreement at a specific rental location.

# Common Questions About Travel-Incurred Debt



The debt management feature in DTS assists with the monitoring of a debt situation and collection process, as well as management of travel documents that are due to the United States (Due U.S.) Government. Much of the debt management process occurs automatically in DTS, but coordinating certain actions to be taken against the debt and recording the results of those actions are the responsibility of the Debt Management Monitor (DMM).

While performing these duties, it is very beneficial for the DMM to understand common issues which may occur during the process and the questions below touch on just a few of these. For additional information on the debt process, visit *The Guide for Travel-Incurred Debt* at [http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/Guide to Managing Travel Incurred Debt.pdf](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/Guide%20to%20Managing%20Travel%20Incurred%20Debt.pdf).

## Q: Why is the debt notification email important?

The debt notification email is important for several reasons. First, it provides a traveler with a formal notification of debt to the government. Secondly, it includes necessary information for making a payment, including the DFAS mailing address if making a payments by check or money order, the Transaction ID required by Pay.gov, and payroll deduction instructions. It also contains information and time limitations for contesting the debt.

## Q: What in DTS generates a debt notification email?

A specific transaction sent from the accounting system will change the status of the digital signature page from AR SUBMITTED to POS ACK RECEIVED, which generates the debt notification email.

## Q: If a notification is not received within approximately eight days, what should a traveler or DMM do?

If an email is not received within approximately eight days after approval of a DUE US voucher, travelers should contact their organization's DMM for assistance. The DMM will review the document history to check the stamps (as mentioned above) and resolve a potential accounting reject.

## Q: If I do not have the Debt Notification Letter, can I use the Pay.gov remittance option?

In order to use the Pay.gov remittance option, an indebted traveler must have received a Debt Notification email from DTS. It contains a 9-digit transaction ID, which can be found beneath the line of accounting listed in the email. DTS typically generates this email approximately five to eight days after approval of the DUE US document and both the traveler and DMM receive a copy. A traveler should contact their DMM or Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) if they have not received this email after the standard timeframe. If the Debt Notification email containing the transaction ID is deemed unrecoverable, then the required transaction ID is also unrecoverable, and the indebted traveler should remit payment using a check or money order.

## Q: If I have not received confirmation of the debt payment, what should I do next?

If a traveler has made direct remittance for a travel-related debt but DTS does not receive a transaction recording the collection, the DMM should contact the Travel Assistance Center (TAC) to obtain a copy of the manual Cash Collection Voucher (CCV). DFAS processes collections and sends a copy of the resulting CCV to the TAC, so the TAC may then expedite the retrieval and distribution of the CCV via an attachment to the ticket.

# Coming to A Mobile Device Near You . . .

## TraX Touch

DoD Travel Explorer Mobile



Have you ever wanted to quickly look up per diem rates or City Pair Fares? If so, you can now use TraX Touch, the mobile version of Travel Explorer (TraX). Users can access some of the same familiar features available in the desktop version of TraX, as well as a few new features. With TraX Touch, users can also check the status of DTS or EWTS, view the latest FAA Alerts, and check the status of an upcoming flight.

TraX Touch is available for mobile devices including iPhone, Android, Blackberry 6+, iPod Touch, iPad, Android Tablets, Blackberry Playbook, and Windows Mobile 7.

While TraX Touch has the look and feel of a mobile app, it is actually a website which does not require users to download any software. To access TraX Touch from a mobile device, use your native web browser to go to: <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/mobile>, and save the URL as a shortcut on your smartphone or tablet.

*Note: For frequently asked questions regarding TraX Touch, visit the Knowledge Center in TraX.*



## TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAMS

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency offers several 'trusted traveler' programs that are designed to expedite the security screening process at participating airports for pre-approved, low risk travelers.

These programs, such as SENTRI, Nexus, and Global Entry, are voluntary programs and are not a requirement for official travel. According to 5 USC §5946 per GSA Bulletin FTR 08-05 of 25 June 2008, travelers are prohibited from using government funds to obtain membership in these types of programs. Therefore, enrollment fees for these programs are not a reimbursable expense.

# USING RESTRICTED AIRFARES



Many DoD travelers frequently ask why they can't use low airfares that they find on Internet travel sites. The truth is, under the right circumstances they can purchase lower-cost, restricted airfares for official travel – but DoD policy requires tickets for official travel be purchased through the contracted Commercial Travel Office (CTO). To do so, they must first get approval from their travel Authorizing Official (AO) and they must be sure that they don't violate any of the rules related to the General Services Administration's contract City-Pair Program. In addition, they need to weigh the savings against the potential additional costs related to changing or canceling a ticket.

Under the rules for the city-pair program, travelers can purchase any ticket at a cost lower than the City-Pair fare if the fare is available to the general public. They cannot use a lower-cost fare that is limited to government travelers such as a discount government (DG) or category z (CATZ) fare. In addition, they must use a U.S. flag carrier, if available, and they can only fly on DoD approved airlines. Finally, if the airline that has the contract for the City-Pair also offers the same reduced fare, then the traveler must purchase the reduced fare ticket from that City-Pair carrier.

The advantage with the City-Pair Program is that the tickets are unrestricted, which means they can be changed without any penalties and are fully refundable, if canceled. With restricted fare tickets, they are non-refundable, and the value of any canceled tickets can only be applied towards a new ticket purchased by the same traveler within the time frame established by the airline,

generally with a hefty penalty. Whenever a traveler changes a restricted ticket, the traveler must pay a change fee in addition to any increase in the ticket based on what fares are available at the time the change is made. Therefore, the traveler and AO must consider how likely it is that the trip will not be changed or canceled, as well as what the likelihood is that the traveler will be able to re-use the ticket within the timeframe required by the airline if the trip is canceled. Travelers whose plans change frequently, or travel at the last minute, generally are not good candidates for restricted tickets.

Each airline has different rules, change fees, and penalties, so the traveler and AO must read the particular airline's fare rules carefully before deciding to purchase a restricted ticket. Purchasing a cheaper restricted ticket should be considered if a trip has very firm start and end dates, such as a conference, and the traveler is unlikely to be recalled home or elsewhere. If the cost difference between a restricted ticket and a City-Pair ticket is greater than any change fee, penalty, then the restricted ticket could be a good way to save government resources.

# BEWARE: Extra Hotel Fees

If you have stayed in a hotel, you are probably aware that there are fees for using the telephone, enjoying a visit to the mini-bar or calling room service for that late night burger. But what you may not know is that there may be additional fees imposed by a CONUS hotel that will change the total cost of your stay and could affect your reimbursement.

Several years ago hotels started charging “early departure fees” for leaving earlier than your original reservation stated. If you are staying in a resort, you may be charged a “resort fee” or a “housekeeping fee.” Some hotels are even imposing “energy surcharges” and “utility service” fees. In addition to a state tax, some locations impose a

city, county or municipality tax. In some situations, there is a tax for renovation of a convention center or a new freeway. Most of



these fees are not negotiable and are therefore reimbursable as a result. However, some fees, like gym usage, newspaper delivery, or pet care, are “optional” and are not considered a reimbursable expense.

It is important to note that in OCONUS locations, these costs are typically included in the overall hotel cost and therefore should not be claimed or reimbursed separately.

Not all hotels charge additional fees and it is a good idea to be aware of which fees are reimbursable so you can make an informed hotel selection to avoid some or all of these costs. Review the JFTR/JTR, Appendix G to determine which charges are covered prior to making a hotel reservation.

## QUICK TIP: KEEP THEM MOVING!

If a designated Authorizing Official (AO) on a routing list is unavailable to approve a Defense Travel System (DTS) document, a traveler’s reservations cannot be made and airline tickets cannot be issued. Fortunately, Defense Travel Administrators (DTA) can quickly resolve this situation.

If another AO is available, a DTA can add a replacement Routing Official (RO) using the DTA Maintenance Tool. When a replacement RO is added, it creates an adjustment and the system restarts the electronic routing process. Making this change means travelers or users with access to that traveler’s documents must re-sign any impacted documents.

A second solution is to ensure at least one person within the organization’s chain of command has the correct permission levels and approval override. Their intervention moves the document

forward for approval without altering the routing list. It is recommended that this person not be a DTA so that separation of duties guidelines are not violated.

How will a DTA know when these options should be exercised? DTAs should be proactively monitoring all DTS documents in order to catch this type of situation and implement the change before it becomes a problem. Additionally travelers should be aware of how long it normally takes for document approval in their organization and contact their DTA if approval is not received.

Of course, the ongoing maintenance of accurate routing lists is the best practice and the preferred way to prevent the need for either action. DTAs should regularly review routing lists to ensure only personnel who are present in the organization and who have access to DTS are included. Further, it is important for DTAs to be aware of who in a routing list is on leave or without access to the system.

Prior to incorporating any of the suggestions above in your organization’s procedures, please check for alignment with your component’s guidance.

## DoD Lodging Link Added To DTS Homepage

In an effort to better assist travelers with utilizing DoD lodging when traveling to military installations, a link to [www.dodlogging.net](http://www.dodlogging.net) has been added to the DTS homepage. The link directs users to a website that allows travelers to easily check availability and book accommodations at DoD Lodging properties.



## GTCC ATM Fees Increasing

The ATM service fee charged by Citi, the Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) vendor, will be increasing from 2% to 2.2%. The fee remains an authorized reimbursable expense when the withdrawal is associated with official travel. Cardholders will also receive notification either in their next statement or via separate mailing if no statement is generated. Rates will go in to effect on June 22 for USAF, June 23 for DoD Agencies and July 6 for Navy, USMC and July 11 for Army. Questions should be directed to your Agency Program Coordinator (APC).

## Looking for DTS or EWTS Downtime?



System downtime notifications are posted in several locations. Travelers and administrators are encouraged to look at the “DTS Update” or “EWTS Update” announcements posted in the Notices section of the DTS homepage ([www.defensetravel.osd.mil](http://www.defensetravel.osd.mil)) or the “Announcement” section of TraX ([www.defensetravel.dod.mil/passport](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/passport)). Downtime is also posted in the Message Center after user log in.

## Did You Know . . .

Did you know that when travelers fail to notify their Commercial Travel office (CTO) of an unused or partially unused ticket it costs the Government money? Unused tickets have a monetary value and must be returned to the Government. Cancellations resulting in an unused or partially unused ticket should be reported to the CTO as soon as possible and must be returned in the manner they were received. If you received a paper ticket from your CTO, the paper ticket must be returned to the CTO in order for the refund to be initiated.



### *About the Defense Travel Dispatch*

The Defense Travel Dispatch is a quarterly publication issued by the Defense Travel Management Office, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness).

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