

Defense Travel Dispatch

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*The DoD Center
for Travel Excellence*



Defense Travel Transformation Underway

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Some Travel Cards Set to Expire

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DTMO Website Redesign Effort Underway

The DTMO website is being redesigned and it is set to be unveiled in Fall 2010. [Story »](#)

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Travel Industry Perspectives: New Trends and Technology

At the recent Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) Seminar in Denver, attendees learned about current trends in the travel industry. One such trend is the use of mobile applications. [Story »](#)

Focus on the Traveler: Know Your Passenger Rights

Did you know that passengers departing from a European Union (EU) airport may be entitled to compensation for a delayed or cancelled flight? Learn what you need to know about compensation, notifications, and your rights. [Story »](#)

DTMO is outlining 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 within 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

Quick Links

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About the Defense Travel Management Office

DTMO 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.

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

Defense Travel Transformation Underway

Recent studies of defense travel have universally concluded that travel is too complicated and that it is crucial that the Department of Defense (DoD) simplify it. In response, the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) has launched an effort to transform defense travel.

With over 1,000 pages of rules (i.e., JFTR, JTR), 76 trip types, more than 100 allowance computations, and 32 training modules to educate travelers and authorizing officials about travel rules, the current defense travel environment is complex. Also complicating the complexity of the travel environment are factors such as, the diversity of DoD travelers, the numerous rules for nearly all travel situations, and inflexible legislative authority governing travel. Terminology and language are so elaborate and confusing that often lawyers are needed to interpret travel rules. Additionally, there is a lack of consolidated travel data needed to formulate business-based decisions.

As a consequence, the defense travel experience can often be frustrating and confusing for travelers, approving officials, and finance personnel. While there are many innovations and technologies the Department could leverage from industry, DoD's complex rule set hinders our ability to use them.

The intricacy of defense travel also affects the Defense Travel System (DTS). Each travel rule has to be programmed into the system, resulting in over two million



lines of code and a travel system that is not easily maintained or modified.

In preparation for simplifying travel, DTMO partnered with the General Services Administration (GSA) on a government-wide review of travel policies, which was completed in March 2009. The review used a series of workshops to assess travel and compile input, resulting in high level recommendations for change.

Transformation efforts are also being guided by last year's Congressionally-directed report on defense travel simplification. In the report, we identified primary areas of confusion and opportunities to pilot promising innovations, as well as recommended legislative changes and a multi-year implementation plan.

DTMO is pursuing an incremental transformation strategy that will synchronize policy, rules, and computation changes with systems and training, to preclude disruption of day-to-day travel activities or adverse impact to mission accomplishment. The expected outcomes from the defense travel transformation initiative will benefit the Department and the traveler in many ways. These benefits will include clear, easy to understand travel rules and travelers will know up front the reimbursements to which they are entitled. Approving Officials will have more discretion to make good travel and budget decisions for the organization and the traveler. Finance personnel will have a reduced burden in developing cost comparisons and processing travel vouchers.

Defense travel transformation cannot be accomplished overnight. It will be an evolutionary, incremental effort, proposing streamlined legislative authority and simplifying travel policy.



Some Government Travel Charge Cards Set to Expire

The Government Travel Charge Cards (GTCC) issued during the travel card transition in 2008, will begin to expire starting August 2010. Standard accounts will automatically be reissued cards unless the Agency Program Coordinator (APC) advises otherwise.

APCs will conduct an informal review of all restricted accounts. If, after this informal review, an APC determines that a more formal assessment is necessary before the GTCC is reissued, Citi will conduct a credit check. Agency Program Coordinators (APCs) will contact travelers who have been identified as needing further assessment by Citi before their GTCC is renewed. Prior to the credit check, cardholders must agree to the review and also submit an application for renewal.

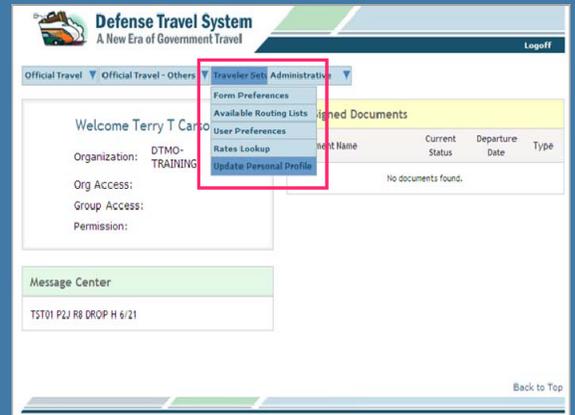
Upon receipt of a new GTCC, travelers are required to update their DTS profile to include the new expiration date. For reissued centrally billed accounts (CBA), Defense Travel Administrators (DTA), should work with their local APC or CBA account manager to coordinate with their CBA-DTA to ensure the account expiration dates are updated in the DTS CBA Module.

For questions about card/account expiration and reissue, contact your local APC or contact Citi customer service.



Updating GTCC Information in DTS

1. From your DTS homepage (after login), mouse over to **Traveler Setup** on the top menu bar and select **Update Personal Profile**.



2. On the **My Profile** screen, select **My Account Information**. Here you may view or adjust your Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and GTCC information.
3. To save changes, select the **Update Personal Information** button at the bottom of the screen

** If you are unable to log in to DTS, contact your Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) to update your profile.*

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

Travel Assistance Center

1-888-Help-1-Go

*If calling from overseas, use
DSN 312-564-3950 or dial 809-463-3376
(wait for beep), then dial 888-Help-1-Go*

www.defensetravel.dod.mil/passport
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

DTMO Website Redesign Effort Underway

DTMO is pleased to announce that we will launch a redesigned website in Fall 2010.

The new design includes an enhanced user interface, improved site navigation, and updated content that better reflects DTMO's mission and role within the evolving Defense Travel Enterprise. The user-centric design showcases our continued commitment to customer service by providing easier access to the information and tools that the DoD travel community needs. This redesign also merges the Per Diem Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee (PDTATAC) and DTMO websites.

The redesigned website's new features include:

In the Spotlight – Stay abreast of the latest news and events from across the Defense Travel Enterprise.

- 1 **Director's Blog** – Hear from DTMO Director Ms. Pam Mitchell, and communicate directly with her and other members of the DoD travel community.

- 2 **Travel Tools** – Find comprehensive travel tools in one location, including: DTS, Travel Explorer (TraX), Allowance Calculator Tools, Per Diem Rates, DoD Travel Regulations and Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) locator.

- 3 **DTS Information** – Access the latest information about DTS including system downtime announcements, and system enhancements.

- 4 **Connect (Future)** - Link to the most popular web 2.0 technologies such as:

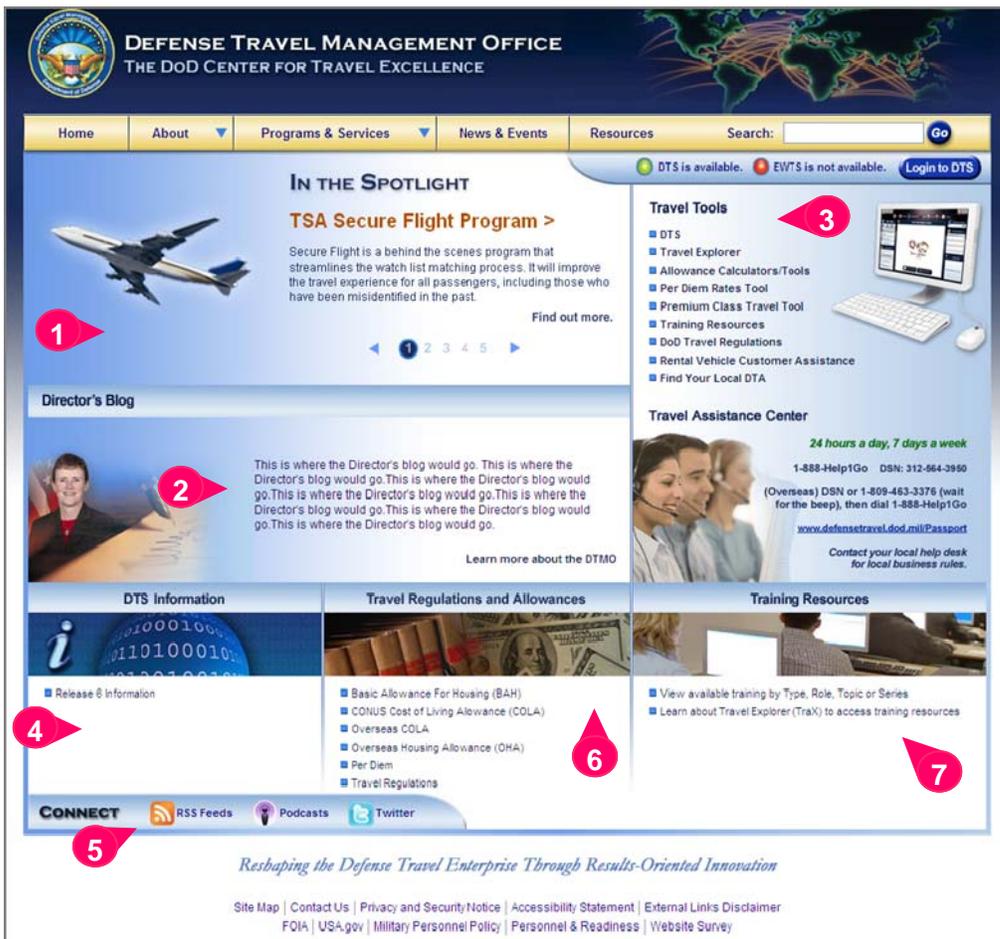
- **RSS Feeds** – Subscribe to one of our RSS feeds to get the latest Defense travel news delivered directly to your inbox
- **Podcasts** – Watch our videos for more in-depth information on topics that affect you most

- **Twitter** – Follow us on Twitter for up-to-the-minute updates on a variety of travel topics

- 6 **Allowances and Travel Regulations** – Learn more about CONUS and Overseas Cost of Living Allowances, Basic Allowance for Housing, Overseas Housing Allowances, and Per Diem programs for which DTMO analyzes and prescribes rates. Calculate your allowances, find current or historical rates, and view immediate and monthly changes to the travel regulations.

- 7 **Training Resources** – Find training resources available for travelers and administrators. Link directly to TraX to find out what type of training is right for you.

Please continue to monitor the DTMO website for more information.





GSA Adds Destinations and Carriers to City Pair Program

The General Services Administration (GSA) recently announced that as of October 1, 2010, it will add 749 new routes and three additional carriers to its City Pair Program. The program offers discounted rates and provides benefits to federal employees traveling on official business. The program saves the government an estimated \$6.3 billion annually.

On average, the FY 2011 City Pair Program will offer government travelers as much as a 68 percent discount off of comparable commercial air fares. By pairing sets of origins and destinations, GSA leverages Federal Government buying power to price discounted one-way airline tickets. The program also offers dual fare markets to provide flexibility for immediate travel, as well as discounted fares for booking flights early.

“By leveraging our buying power as a government-wide contracting arm for federal travel, GSA is able to negotiate prices through City Pairs with 13 air carriers to more than 5,000 locations at a significantly discounted cost to the Federal Government,” said GSA’s Acting Federal Acquisition Service Commissioner, Steven J. Kempf.

He further states, “Over the past year, GSA’s focus on finding additional cost avoidance while increasing choice and flexibility has once again created an even more dynamic City Pair Program that continues to lead the industry with firm, fixed pricing, flexible policy, and government-wide savings.”

The City Pair Program offers 4,299 domestic and 1,423 international routes. The updated contracts for FY 2011 include three additional airlines – Continental, Hawaiian, and Southwest – resulting in a total of 13 carriers participating.

When awarding City Pair contracts to airlines, GSA considers criteria such as availability of non-stop service, total number of flights, flight availability throughout the day, average elapsed flight time, availability of jet service, and price of service. GSA works with federal organizations, such as the DTMO on behalf of DoD, to understand requirements and ensure needs are clearly understood.

For more information about the City Pair Program, please visit the DTMO website or GSA at www.gsa.gov/citypairs.

Caution: Using Non-Contract Airmiles



Discount Government (DG) airmiles, also referred to as “me too” fares, are competitive airmiles available to Government travelers. DoD policy requires travelers to use the GSA contract City Pair carrier unless a specific exception applies (*see* Joint Travel Regulations (JTR)/Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR) Appendix P, Part I). While the costs of DG airmiles are often the same or less than the GSA City Pair fares, travelers should be cautioned about the risks associated with their use.

Unlike the GSA City Pair Program, no contract exists between the airline and the Government. The rules and restrictions associated with non-contract airmiles, means that DG fares may not be as flexible as City Pair fares. Use of these fares may result in additional airfare costs to the Government and also impact travel.

Before booking non-contract government fares, travelers should be aware that:

- **Seats are capacity controlled** - Airlines limit the amount of seats sold at the discount price.
- **Airmiles are not guaranteed until ticketed** - Airlines have the right to increase or discontinue the fare at any time. Normal ticket issuance is three business days prior to travel unless the fare rules require earlier ticketing.
- **Fare rules may change** - Airlines have the right to change the rules of the fare at any time to include the booking class and advance purchase/ticketing requirements, change fees, etc.
- **Increased risk of cancellations** - Airlines can cancel un-ticketed reservations, especially those booked on capacity controlled non-contract fares.

Travel Training Highlights



FISCAL YEAR CROSSOVER

Geared toward local Finance and Budget Defense Travel Administrators, this class provides an overview of the upcoming fiscal year crossover process including a review of lines of accounting rollover and copy functions, as well as the process for setting up associated budgets for the new fiscal year. This course is offered in a web-based training or distance learning format.

Web-based Training **Now Available!**

Offered as a self-paced, on demand instruction from your desktop. This class takes an average of 90 minutes to complete and can be completed in more than one sitting. This estimate assumes participants visit all of the mandatory material, approximately half of the optional material and complete the assessment at the end of the module. Class length may vary depending on your reading speed, amount of material accessed, and other factors.

Distance Learning **Upcoming classes: August 10 & 26 and September 2, 14, & 21**

Taught by a live instructor, this class is offered in an interactive environment using a combination of PowerPoint presentations and live demonstrations. On average, this class takes about 60 minutes to complete.

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE CENTER & TRAVEL EXPLORER



Distance Learning **Now Available!**

Learn about the Travel Assistance Center and opportunities available within Travel Explorer.

PARTNERS IN DEFENSE TRAVEL



Distance Learning **Coming Fall 2010**

A smooth interaction among all partners in Defense travel is vital. Understanding the interactions among travelers, Authorizing Officials, the Defense Travel System, and the Commercial Travel Offices promotes a smooth travel process.



Travel training schedules and resources are available through TraX (www.defensetravel.dod.mil/passport). Visit the Training Center to access web-based or Distance Learning course and demonstrations. Visit the Knowledge Center for access to instructor tools and reference materials.



Bus Carriers Offer Greener Mode of Travel

Interested in a greener and more cost-effective mode of travel? Traveling by bus not only emits fewer greenhouse gas emissions than an airplane or multiple rental cars, but costs far less per passenger mile than other modes of transportation. With more than 400 bus, van, and limousine carriers participating in the Military Bus Program, DoD offers access to safe and cost-effective ground transportation.

DTMO manages the Military Bus Program, which ensures that commercial carriers participating in the program provide safe vehicles that consistently meet DoD-prescribed standards of service. While DoD commercial transportation needs are most often met through air travel, buses offers a flexible, accessible, adaptable, and notably greener alternative. Traveling by bus is ideal for DoD ground transportation requirements ranging from interstate transportation, transfer to and from airports, movement between facilities, military exercises, redeployments and special events.

For more information on the Military Bus Program visit DTMO's website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil or contact milbus@dtmo.pentagon.mil.



DTMO's comprehensive approach to transforming the Defense Travel Enterprise includes working with industry partners and exploring leading practices, technologies and innovations for the next generation of travel.

At the recent Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) Seminar

and enter other trip information to build complete travel itineraries that can be accessed without an internet connection. *Gate Guru* (free on iTunes), provides access to airport layout maps that show locations of gates, bathrooms, restaurants, shops, ATMs, customer service desks, and more.

Travel Industry Perspectives: New Trends and Technologies



in Denver, Norm Rose, a leading authority on emerging travel technologies and travel related e-business, spoke about current trends in the travel industry. One such trend is the use of mobile applications. Both the adoption of smartphones and the implementation of next generation networks have contributed to the growth of mobile applications. Rose said, "there is a direct correlation between the adoption of the smartphone and frequent business travelers." Research indicates that business travelers are increasingly using smartphones, rather than traditional cell phones, because the technology accesses both websites and email. In turn, members of the travel industry are updating their websites, creating applications (apps), and sending email notifications in an effort to simplify and shorten the travel process.

Several apps currently available can be useful tools for the business traveler. One such app is *My TSA* (free on iTunes or from www.tsa.gov/mobile). It allows travelers to check approximate wait times at TSA security checkpoints, monitor airport delays, read travel tips and get answers to frequently asked security and carry-on questions. Another useful app is *TriplIt* (free on iTunes or from www.tripit.com), which functions as a travel organizer. Forward travel confir-

For a small cost, apps such as *FlightTrack* (\$4.99 Basic version on iTunes and other smartphone websites), can provide live flight tracker maps with integrated weather radar so travelers can monitor cancellations and delays, and get a real time status of gate locations.

In addition to smartphones, the rise in popularity of social networking sites has resulted in the travel industry establishing sites specifically designed for travel information exchange and discussion forums. "Social networking sites also are being used by travel suppliers for brand protection, brand awareness, and brand promotion," said Rose, as "Facebook has surpassed Google as the number one website in the United States." sites have paved the way for established air, car, and hotel vendors to open up their websites to customer participation and provide travel tools to simplify travel."

What does this mean for the DoD traveler? As new travel technologies emerge, and are adopted by the travel industry, DTMO will continue to look at ways to implement better solutions to effectively support travelers while at the same time providing the best value for the DoD travel community.

TSA Establishes Travel Blog



The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has established a blog to facilitate ongoing dialogue with stakeholders on innovations in security, technology and the checkpoint

screening process.

The TSA blog covers a myriad of topics from discussing items that should not be taken on a plane, to fighting terrorism with technology, Wounded Warriors, the differ-

ences between checked and carry-on baggage, and the Secure Flight program.

To strengthen its relationships with stakeholders and the traveling public, TSA's blog recently launched a new feature, "Talk to TSA," where travelers can submit feedback for a specific airport's Customer Support Manager. Additionally, TSA's blog also includes a "What to Know Before You Go" feature that provides comprehensive information to the air traveler.

To access TSA's blog, visit <http://blog.tsa.gov>.

Focus on the Traveler

Know Your Passenger Rights

Flights to/from the European Union

Did you know that passengers departing from a European Union (EU) airport *may* be entitled to compensation for a delayed or cancelled flight? Under the European Parliament Regulations EC 261, airlines are required to compensate travelers when the carrier is responsible for flight delays or cancellations. The regulation applies to all flights departing from the EU regardless of the passenger's nationality.

According to the European Commission's website, travelers are entitled to compensation by the airline for expenses such as a phone call, meals, and accommodations (including transportation to the place of accommodation) if the delay is:

- two hours or more for flights of 1,500 km or less
- three hours or more for longer flights within the European Union or for other flights between 1,500 and 3,500 km
- four hours or more for flights of over 3,500 km outside the European Union

If the delay is more than five hours, and you decide to not continue your journey, you are also entitled to have your ticket reimbursed and be flown back to your original departure point.

Additionally, if you arrive at your final destination after a delay of three hours or more, you may also be entitled to identical compensation to that offered when your flight gets cancelled, unless the airline can prove that the delay was caused by extraordinary circumstances. Airlines can also be held liable for damages resulting from delays.

The law applies to any European Union airline flying to or from a member state, as well as all flights departing from Europe, including those operated by U.S. airlines. However, unlike the EU there are no enforcement agencies for this regulation outside of Europe. Still, it is worth knowing the law and pursuing a claim if you are on a flight from Europe that is delayed or canceled.

Filing a Claim

Travelers are encouraged to take the following steps if they feel their entitlements under air passenger rights legislation

have been breached. First, contact the airline or speak with a customer service representative at the airport. If you are not satisfied with their response, you can submit a complaint with a National Enforcement Body (NEB) for the country where the incident took place

For more information, visit the European Commission's website at: <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/passenger-rights/en/index.html>.

Involuntary Bumping

A common practice among airlines is to overbook scheduled flights to compensate for passenger "no-shows." This practice can result in travelers being "bumped" from their seats, even if flying on city pair fare. The Department of Transportation (DOT) requires airlines to comply with overbooking regulations, which can dictate how passengers are notified and compensated.

When a flight is overbooked, DOT requires airlines to first seek those passengers who are willing to relinquish their seat in exchange for compensation and a later flight. If there are no volunteers, airlines can seize seats but must offer denied boarding compensation and comply with specific regulations, including providing passengers with a written statement describing their rights and explaining the process for deciding who can board and who gets bumped on an overbooked flight.

According to the Joint Travel Federal Regulations (JFTR) paragraph U1200-C and Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), paragraph C1200-C, government travelers who volunteer to relinquish their seat may keep compensation from the carrier but cannot claim extra per diem or compensation time, and must pay out of pocket for any additional costs incurred. For those travelers who are involuntarily "bumped" or are delayed when flying out of a European Union airport, the government is entitled to the compensation provided by the airlines. Travelers should request compensation in the form of a check made payable to the U.S. Treasury. DoD travelers should not accept cash or travel vouchers as compensation. However, if the traveler is involuntarily bumped or delayed, the traveler remains in a travel status and is authorized per diem.

The most effective way to reduce the risk of being bumped is to check-in early to obtain advanced seat assignments and arrive at the airport early. For more information regarding overbooking and passenger rights, visit the DOT website at: <http://airconsumer.dot.gov/publications/flyrights.htm#overbooking>.



DTS Update

The R8 software update implemented on July 17, 2010, had an issue that was not discovered during testing. This issue caused degraded performance, slow load time, delays in processing, and periods of unavailability. Software engineers resolved these issues and the system returned to normal operating status a few days later.

Please note that only emergency software updates will be implemented between July 22, 2010 and October 15, 2010. However, the system may be unavailable due to scheduled maintenance during that period.

Continue to monitor the DTS homepage, TraX or the DTMO website for any announcements related to upcoming downtimes and the status of DTS.

Notable DTS Functionality Changes

Recent software updates have resolved several system problem reports (SPR) and resulted in the following notable functionality changes:

- **Easier way to update User Profile**

Travelers are now able to view and edit their personal profiles directly from their *DTS User Welcome* screen. Before this change, travelers had to create a document to access this page or contact their Defense Travel Administrator (DTA).

To update a profile, login and navigate to the *DTS User Welcome* screen. Mouse over **Traveler Setup** on the top menu bar and select **Update Personal Profile** from the drop-down list to open the *My Profile* screen. To save changes to the permanent profile, select Update Personal Information button at the bottom of the screen. Any changes made will not affect current documents.

- **Restore DTS documents previously moved to secondary storage**

DTS documents are moved to a secondary storage location (also known as “purged”) after 15 months of inactivity. DTS documents may need to be restored from the secondary storage location if a traveler needs to access the document to support a travel claim audit, investigation, or to complete an amendment. This new feature allows travelers/users to instantly access DTS documents that have been purged without submitting a help desk ticket to the Travel Assistance Center.

To restore a document, login to DTS and navigate to the *DTS User Welcome* screen. Mouse over **Official Travel** from the menu bar and select **Restore Purged Documents** from the drop-down list. On the *Purged Trip Documents* screen, select the **Restore** link next to the document to be restored.



- **Enhanced Cross-organization funding functionality**

Finance Defense Travel Administrators (FDTA) have the option to designate Lines of Accounting (LOA) to specific travelers in another organization. Previously, LOAs could only be designated to an organization, not individual users. With this change, FDTAs can designate which routing lists can be used in a travel document that is being funded by a Cross-Organization LOA. Additionally, the routing list can be controlled for the travel document being funded.

- **Improved information on approval failures**

This enhancement provides a consolidated record of the actions triggered by the approval process. Previously, certain events such as on-screen messages to an Authorizing Official at approval were not recorded in the audit results.

The **View Reasons for Audit Failures** link has been renamed to “**View Results of Approval Action**” when the APPROVED stamp is available for selection. Selecting this link will display audit results for the document to include, hard audit checks, funding validation, Tickets Are Waiting (TAW) date application, and electronic payment (EP) process audits. For approval scenarios that do not have EP or hard audit failures, DTS will store other events within the approval process such as an Authorizing Official indicating that a non-ATM cash advance is to be paid immediately.

REMEMBER . . .

The Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR) paragraph U3120 and the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), paragraph C2203 require the use of a commercial travel office (CTO) to book all official travel. Using DTS, which is mandated, allows you to book through a CTO. Using a CTO ensures the best overall value for tax payer dollars.

U.S. Navy Recognized for Travel Card Transition Efforts

When the travel charge card program transitioned from Bank of America to Citi in 2008, DoD was able to reconcile travel card accounts to ensure that the Department did not owe Bank of America for unpaid charges. Recently, the U.S. Navy's Financial Management Office was recognized for their role in this effort. At the American Society of Military Comptrollers' Professional Development Institute conference held in Orlando, Florida in June, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) presented the Navy's 15-person team with an award for their efforts in reconciling more than \$1.8 million in centrally billed accounts (CBA), reducing the Navy's outstanding balance to zero in a matter of months.

DTMO would like to congratulate the Navy, as well as all other organizations involved, for their efforts in helping the DoD achieve a zero balance at the end of the contract.

DTS Helpful Hints: Tracking the Status of Documents

Defense Travel Administrators (DTA), local help desks, and the Travel Assistance Center (TAC) often receive questions related to the status of their documents in the Defense Travel System (DTS).

To view the status of a document:

1. Mouse over **Official Travel** and select the desired document type (Authorization/Orders, Vouchers, Local Vouchers or Group Authorizations/Orders).
2. Depending on the document selected, you will be taken to the existing documents page. The *Sort by Status* column shows the last action taken on the document (Figure 1).
3. The Digital Signature Page shows the document history and the pending routing actions. To view the **Digital Signature Page**, select *view/edit* on the document list. On the **Preview Trip Page**, select *Digital Signature* at the top of the screen (Figure 2).
4. The pending routing actions will show the actions waiting to be performed on the document (i.e., AUTHORIZED, CERTIFIED, APPROVED) along with the name of the routing official. The document history shows the actions which have been performed along with the date, time, user who performed the action, and any remarks.

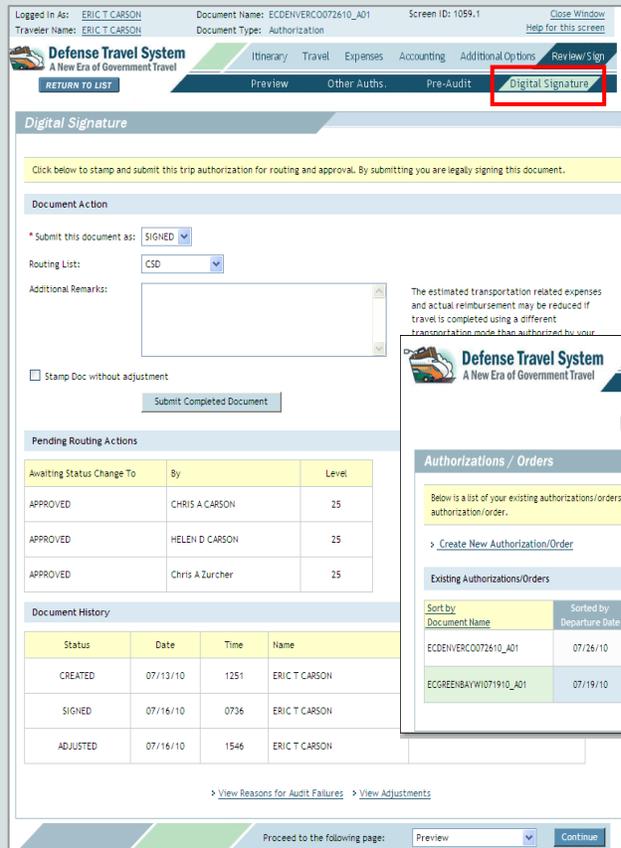


Figure 2: Digital Signature Page

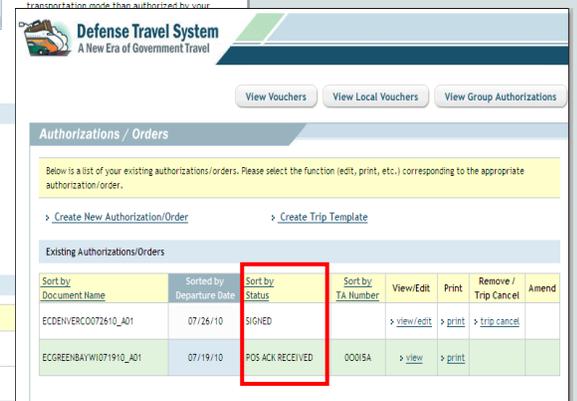


Figure 1: Existing Documents

Denver Seminar a Success

In early June, over 500 Defense Travel Administrators from around the world gathered at the second of this year's Defense Travel Administrator Seminars – Connect 2010. Attendees 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.



Similar in format to the event held in Alexandria, VA in April, seminar attendees welcomed several guest speakers including Mr. David Swatloski from the Business Transformation Agency (BTA), and Mr. Norman Rose, who is regarded as one of the country's leading travel experts. New to this seminar was Mr. LC Williams, Associate Director of the Human Resources Directorate for the Department of the Interior. Mr. Williams discussed time-tested principles for becoming better, more effective leaders.

The 2010 Excellence in Practice awards were presented to three organizations, recognizing their tremendous efforts in providing support to their units.

Due to the astounding interest in these seminars, DTMO is planning to expand the 2011 seminar schedule to include an overseas location. For more information about future events, please visit the DTMO website.



Congratulations to the 2010 Award Winners

The Elite: Team Excellence in Customer Service

First Marine Expeditionary Force Tier II DTS Helpdesk

The First Marine Expeditionary Force Tier II Helpdesk has an impressive travel assistance program that supports over 40,000 military and civilian travelers at Marine Corps Bases across California and Arizona. Its efforts include initiatives such as:

- Use of a monitoring tool to track and verify permission levels with appointment letters
- Conducting Post Payment Audits for a percentage of each organization
- Reviewing authorizations and vouchers for the newest users due to a constant and high-volume turnover
- Conducting weekly, monthly, and advanced training quarterly for DTAs
- Maintaining a comprehensive website

The Icon: Excellence in Travel Program Guidance and Communication

COMSUBPAC Travel Improvement Team, U.S Navy

The U.S. Navy's COMSUBPAC Travel Improvement team embarked on a travel improvement program just over a year ago. The program involved at least two site visits to seven geographical locations consisting of 86 operational units to disseminate compliance policies and internal management controls. The program includes a sustainment phase with a travel program desk guide for sailors, a command assistance desk, self-assessment and inspection checklists, workbooks with audit results for each command, and a comprehensive travel management instruction unifying DTS, Centrally and Individually Billed Accounts.

The Champion: Best Mentor and Coach

Kimberly Hood, Lead DTA, Indiana Army National Guard

Ms. Hood embodies all of the qualities of a successful mentor. While implementing DTS across Indiana's Army National Guard, she worked to increase quality support to DTAs. She has increased the overall number of DTAs her team supports, while expanding the training and support it provides. Ms. Hood works to keep DTAs informed by updating her organization's website with the latest business rules, customer service notifications and relevant DTS information. Her mentoring program includes one-on-one sessions with new organizational DTAs, where she focuses on their individual duties. Further, Ms. Hood and her team serve as the help desk to all Organizational DTAs across her organization. She serves as a mentor to four LDTAs and is the Chair of the DTS Committee of the Army National Guard Resource Management Advisory Committee.

Information for Trainers

DTMO Web-Based Training Classes Improved



In April, DTMO completed upgrading several web-based training (WBT) classes. We would like to thank those who offered recommendations on improvements. Your input is vital to the improvement process. If you have additional recommendations for improvements to training resources, classes, or ideas for new materials, please submit a Travel Assistance Center help ticket through TraX or send an e-mail to DTMOTraining@dtmo.pentagon.mil.

Changes were made to further clarify some subject matter, provide a better user experience, and correct an isolated flaw in the programming that left a small number of users unable to successfully complete the DTS Travel Documents assessment. Specific changes include:

Series: DTS (Basic)

Title: DTS Travel Documents (DTS 101)

Areas to Improve

- Assessment marked items incorrect before student provided input
- On-screen “target areas” in exercises were too small
- Forgetting to hit <Enter> after typing in text box could lock up exercise

Changes Made

- Assessment waits for student to provide input before grading items
- Enlarged target areas where possible¹
- Added on-screen reminders during text entry tasks

Series: FDTA

Title: Debt Management Monitor

Areas to Improve

- Some procedures and actions were unclear:
- Times that local business rules need to be employed
 - DTS actions that occur automatically
 - Who is responsible for certain manual actions

Changes Made

- Clarified:
- When local business rules need to be employed
 - When DTS takes actions without need for DMM input
 - Person or organization responsible for manual actions

Series: AO/RO

Title: TAOCO (COL)²

Areas to Improve

- Security pop-up appeared on every page

Changes Made

- Pages now open without displaying security pop-up

¹ Selecting a date from a calendar (Figure 1) is an example of a situation in which it was NOT possible to expand the target area. Because of the close proximity of selectable items on the calendar, clicking outside the target area will cause you to select an incorrect date. For example, refer to the calendar image. If the correct action is to select September 20 (the green square), missing the target area will likely result in the selection of one of the red surrounding dates (September 12, 13, 14, 19, 21, 26, 27, or 28), all of which are incorrect answers.

² Acronym expands to “Training for Accountable Officials and Certifying Officers (Certifying Officer Legislation)”



Figure 1

TraX Functionality Continues to Expand

Designed to help travelers who need instant travel assistance or information, TraX provides a centralized source for travel information for the DoD travel community. Recent enhancements to Travel Explorer (TraX) functionality expand this travel support.

Hotel Data

TraX users now have access to CONUS lodging options by location. Hotel data is provided on over 52,000 domestic Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved hotels and can be viewed either in list format or on a map within a radius search, and can be filtered by distance. Users can locate this information from TraX's Trip Tool's Calculator or Lodging. International hotel information is not yet available.

Enhanced Trip Calculator

Users who have trip estimates in TraX can now click on the calendar icon in the Trip Calculator, under My Trips, and a calendar will appear. Travelers can simply drag the dates of existing travel estimates and TraX will update per diem based on that change. Click on the "Save Trip Date Changes" at the top of the calendar to save changes.

Air

This feature in TraX Trip Tools has been improved, so that travelers do not have to visually select an airport location on the map. Additionally, the map now highlights only those airports with a city pair match within the radius of the two cities selected.

Maps

When creating an estimate, auto zoom has been optimized so that it adjusts to the appropriate level based on the two locations entered. For example, Washington D.C. to San Francisco will zoom out to provide a larger area map, whereas Washington D.C. to Chicago is adjusted for that distance.

Improved Defense Table of Official Distances (DTOD) Interface

In addition to TraX interface with the DTOD for mileage calculation, a round trip functionality has been added so that users do not have to manually enter return trip information.



TraX recently earned GSA's biennial Award for Travel Excellence. The award was presented in July at the National Travel Forum in Orlando, FL. TraX is the first of its kind, one-stop electronic service center for travel information, conceived as a web-based extension of DoD's Travel Assistance Center. It is a new and dynamic tool web-based tool that supports any Department of Defense traveler who needs instant travel assistance or information. It provides "one stop shopping" for travel education, travel issue resolution, and general travel information.

Travel Assistance Center

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

1-888-Help1Go
DSN: 312-564-3950

(Overseas) 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.



Change in COLA Rates for Service Members in Guam and Italy

As a result of recent decreases in the prices of goods and services in comparison to average prices in the US, Service members in Guam and Italy will see changes to their Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) this fall. Overseas COLA is intended to equalize purchasing power so that Service members can purchase the same level of goods and services overseas as they could if they were stationed in the Continental United States (CONUS). When COLA is adjusted, it means that the purchasing power for overseas Service members is more in line with that of their counterparts stationed in the U.S.

Service members stationed in Guam will see a 4-point decrease in their COLA during September and October. Additionally, three duty locations in Italy will see a decline in this allowance. Service members assigned to Gaeta and Livorno will see a two-point drop in September, and members assigned to Ghedi will see a two-point drop in both September and October.

Overseas COLA is not a fixed amount and adjustments based on data are either immediate or made incrementally, depending on whether the payment will increase or decrease. Increases in COLA are made immediately, whereas COLA reductions are phased in over time to help minimize the impact of the adjustment.

Service members can calculate their COLA rate at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/ocform. The calculation tool is updated with the current COLA amounts each pay-period.



Get to Know COLA

Learn more about COLA by reviewing the toolkit available at: www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Sections/COLAToolkit.

The toolkit contains several educational videos and communication products that explain the key elements of the allowance.

Strength of U.S. Dollar Impacts Allowances



The U.S. dollar reached a four-year high against the Euro this spring and continues to remain strong. For Service members

stationed in Europe, the favorable exchange rate will help you purchase more in the local economy.

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 using foreign currency. If the U.S. dollar strength increases, the amount of allowances decreases in an effort to equalize the purchasing power with Service members stationed in the U.S.

Currency fluctuations can affect both Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) and Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) payments. Service members can calculate their allowance payments by using the tools located on the DTMO website at: www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/rateinfo.

Defense Travel Dispatch

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