From: Travel Officer, Naval Postgraduate School  
To: All Hands  
Subj: IMPROVEMENT OF FOREIGN TRAVEL PROCEDURES  
Ref: (a) NPSINST 4650.1B  
(b) Navy DTMO, Defense Travel System Business Rules Version 3.4, November 2021  

1. From November 2022 through May 2023, a review of Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) foreign travel procedures was conducted to assess the process and identify opportunities for improvement. This memo outlines a new process that addresses the issues identified in the review, decreases submission times, and improves NPS’ ability to manage its foreign travel program. It is effective immediately. A review of the process from 2020 to May 2023 identified over 100 staff hours spent on unnecessary foreign clearance submissions, an average of 70 minutes spent on inputting foreign clearance requests through a Microsoft Form for action by the Travel Office, an average of four (4) days processing to enter those requests into the Aircraft and Personnel Automated Clearance System (APACS), and an average of 16 days for those requests to be submitted in APACS by the Security Manager’s Office. Data analysis also revealed that 48.81% of foreign travel processed was for leave travel.

2. User feedback collected through Microsoft Forms submissions was analyzed as the voice of customer (VOC) to assess what customers were looking for in the process. Based on that feedback, customers identified flaws in the existing process in which data collection was redundant, data collected was unnecessary or not applicable to the type of travel required, and that additional data was collected beyond what was submitted through the Microsoft Form for submission. Root cause analysis revealed that the limitations of Microsoft Forms branching functionality and the need to collect a broad list of data points for any given request resulted in the overcollection and under-collection of data from customers due to the varying submission requirements each country have for leave and official travel.

3. Customers expressed desires for enhanced functionality to include editing submissions, the ability to ‘save and continue’ within submissions, and the ability to copy data from past trips to be used in new trips in the future. Feedback from a number of students and one faculty member indicated that those users preferred to handle their own APACS requests, for which the functionality exists. The practice of travelers managing their own APACS requests is common among other Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of the Navy reviewed for comparison, and in some cases included an additional step of passing Travel Tracker/Individual Antiterrorism Plan (TT/IATP) and APACS request numbers to their local Security Manager for tracking purposes.

4. Based on an understanding of NPS foreign travel procedures, the review of the process, VOC, and assessment of systems and functionality, a traveler entering his/her own APACS requests and TT/IATPs into the official systems would reduce overall processing time by ~20 days, reduce workload in the Security Manager’s Office dedicated to APACS submission, and remove the Travel Office from the role of initial data entry to the system, for which the Travel Office is no longer staffed to support after taking directed labor cuts in 2021. TT/IATPs submitted through the official system will be routed through the official system to the NPS Security Manager’s Office where approval support for TT/IATPs, including
‘Buddy Rule,’ O-5/GS-14+ approvals, and other unique approvals would continue. APACS requests will be submitted directly to the processing offices in the theater and country, providing the traveler with real-time status updates and the ability to view the status of requests and contact APACS Approvers, if necessary.

5. To support travelers through the foreign travel requirements an application has been created that contains tutorials, links to important resources and websites related to foreign travel, lists that explain the steps in the foreign travel process, and a space to report foreign travel, foreign contacts, and post-travel debriefs for sensitive compartmentalized information holders to the Security Manager’s Office.

6. Foreign travel procedures are established and implemented by reference (a). A revision to reference (a) is necessary to update foreign travel procedures, references, responsibilities, and codify other changes since 2014. While revisions are underway, the following elements of NPS’ foreign travel procedures are restated, modified, and implemented for both leave and official travel:

   a. Travelers will consult the DoD Foreign Clearance Guide prior to foreign travel, taking immediate action to satisfy all entry requirements before departing. This includes but is not limited to obtaining a special issuance passport, visa, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) travel orders, O-5/GS-14+ approvals, TT/IATP), and country or theater-specific approvals and documentation.

   b. Travelers will notify the Security Manager’s Office 45 to 60 days prior to any foreign travel at www.nps.edu/foreigntravel. Additional coordination with the Security Manager’s Office may be required, so early notification is critical. Travelers are responsible for notifying the Security Manager’s Office of any updates and/or cancellations of travel arrangements.

   c. Travelers will create and submit APACS travel clearance requests in accordance with the DoD Foreign Clearance Guide, when required, and will not travel unless approval is granted. These approvals include Country Clearance, Theater Clearance, and Special Area Clearance. This language replaces paragraph 5.a.(1)(c) of reference (a).

   d. Travelers will enter the APACS number and a statement regarding the disposition of theater, country, and/or special area clearance with any restrictions related to the clearance in the Defense Travel System (DTS) travel authorization as part of a pre-audit remark or “Comments to the Approving Official” for official travel IAW reference (b).

   e. In accordance with reference (b), the Authorizing Official (AO) for travel is the individual responsible for controlling the mission and determining the necessity of trips before official temporary duty travel occurs. An AO must ensure all foreign and NATO travel orders and any other clearance requirements for foreign travelers are met and documented in the travel authorization before approval. This includes ensuring an APACS request was submitted and an APACS ID number is included in the DTS travel authorization as part of a pre-audit remark or “Comments to the Approving Official.”

   f. Supervisors and managers are responsible for asserting oversight and accountability for their subordinates who are executing foreign travel, ensuring all requirements for foreign travel have been satisfied prior to travel. Supervisors shall report instances when a traveler departs without satisfying all foreign travel requirements up their chain of command and consult with the Staff Judge Advocate (for active duty) or Human Resources Office Labor and Employee Relations Branch (for civilians) to apply appropriate corrective action. Supervisors must also notify the Security Manager of unauthorized travel of their subordinates as this must be documented as part of the Continuous Evaluation process. Per the DoD Foreign Clearance Guide and reference (a), travelers who depart without Country Clearance are subject to immediate recall to their unit at the individual’s expense.
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  g.  The NPS Travel Office will monitor foreign travel in the Defense Travel System. As necessary, personnel in the NPS Travel Office may apply the “RETURNED,” “CANCELLED,” or appropriate stamp to travel authorizations that do not have an APACS ID number or indication that all requirements for foreign travel have been satisfied prior to travel.

  h.  The NPS Travel Office will no longer prepare country, theater, and/or special area clearance requests for travelers as stated in paragraph 6 of reference (a).

  i.  The NPS Security Manager’s Office will no longer manage or submit country clearance requests to APACS as stated in paragraph 7 of reference (a).

  j.  To supplement paragraph 8 of reference (a), TT/IATPs will be submitted by the traveler at https://iatp.pacom.mil/, after which the Security Manager’s Office will facilitate supporting documentation and recommendations for leadership approval.

  k.  Those portions of reference (a) not amended above remain in effect.

7.  For assistance and training with new foreign travel procedures, the following are available:

   a.  Traveler Training Sessions:

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8.  Individual and group sessions may also be arranged at Book time with Carr, Vincent (Vinny) (CIV): Foreign Travel Training.

9.  The foreign travel process will be monitored and evaluated. Feedback regarding the foreign travel process should be submitted to the Director, Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) via email or transmitted through the application’s ‘Feedback’ page. A review of feedback and observations of foreign travel procedures shall be performed by the Director, CPI within one year of this memo to assess the efficacy of the process and the need for any procedural or policy adjustments.

S. E. CARTER