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GAO 00335

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Captain R. S. Baird
Director, Navy Military Pay System
Navy Finance Center
New Federal Office Building
Cleveland, Ohio 44199

DLG 03666

Dear Captain Baird:

Navy personnel officers are using different criteria to establish proceed and travel time entitlements when members transfer between activities in the same locality. Annually, an estimated 40,000 officers and enlisted personnel make such transfers. With the variety of local policies currently in effect they may or may not receive 4 days proceed time and 1 day travel time, even though transferring under identical conditions. This could have a twofold effect -- time given to some members who do not need it and denied to others who do, resulting in inequities and ineffective use of manpower.

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The Bureau of Naval Personnel has issued proceed and travel time instructions. However, these don't explain the purpose of proceed time or define "metropolitan area" -- the travel time boundary. Other factors also contribute to the confusion surrounding proceed time: (1) Bureau instructions for enlisted personnel don't cover all types of local transfers, (2) the Bureau has issued conflicting instructions to some activities, and (3) different entitlements are extended to officers and enlisted personnel.

Our findings are summarized below:

PROCEED TIME

Proceed time is defined in the Joint Travel Regulations as a period during which military personnel are authorized to delay the execution of travel orders. No further explanation is given.

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Years ago, we questioned the Navy's proceed time policy and the Bureau informed us certain members are allowed a few days "to arrange personal affairs" while enroute to new duty stations. Traditionally, the Navy has granted 4 days to officers and certain enlisted personnel. Such tradition dates back to at least 1893. Despite its history, many personnel officers apparently are unaware why the time is made available and are uncertain when it should or should not be authorized on local transfers. The term has not been defined in the Naval Personnel Manual.

The manual states that proceed time shall not be granted to enlisted personnel transferring between two stations at the same place or between two ships in the same port, having the same home yard and home port. It is difficult to understand how personnel officers could misinterpret this instruction. However, many enlisted personnel receive 4 days on such transfers, presumably to relocate households and rearrange other personal affairs. The manual does not specify time should be authorized for these purposes.

Another problem: the manual doesn't cover all types of local transfers, e.g., transfers between ships and stations at the same place, ships with identical ports but different home yards, or activities in the same metropolitan areas. In these circumstances many enlisted personnel receive 4 days, but others do not.

Bureau officials are further complicating the problem -- furnishing field activities different interpretations of the manual instructions. One activity was told time should not be authorized to enlisted personnel on local transfers unless justified. Another was told such time may be given at the commanding officer's discretion. Still another was advised the time should be given only if households are relocated.

We recently reviewed local policies of six activities of the Naval Air Force, Atlantic Fleet. Only one was following the manual. As illustrated below the policies at these activities have little similarity.

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- The U.S.S. INDEPENDENCE grants time on transfers to shore stations in Norfolk and adjoining areas. The U.S.S. FORRESTAL does not:
- The Flag Administrative Unit of the Command and the Norfolk Naval Air Station grant time on transfers to ships and stations in the area only if households are relocated. AGC0077Z
- Aircraft Ferry Squadron Thirty-One grants time on all transfers from sea duty billets to shore stations in Norfolk and from shore billets to ships homeported at Norfolk. In similar circumstances, Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron Thirty-Three does not grant time unless personnel relocate households.

We found similar inconsistencies in the accounts of other Navy activities in our central audit at the Navy Finance Center, Cleveland.

We also inquired into the Bureau's policy and related instructions for granting proceed time to officers. Unlike enlisted personnel, they are allowed 4 days on local transfers unless ordered to report immediately or without delay. The personnel offices we visited in Norfolk were complying with the manual instructions. None of the orders we examined expressed haste -- all of the officers were granted 4 days. In contrast, our tests at the Finance Center disclosed that personnel officers in the San Diego area are interpreting the manual instructions differently. We examined detaching endorsements to local transfer orders issued to 75 officers in April and May 1972 -- 49 received 4 days proceed time, 26 did not receive any.

As part of our effort we also reviewed the regulations of the other military departments and the Coast Guard. Marine Corps and Coast Guard regulations deny proceed time to officers and enlisted personnel on transfers between stations in the same place and ships with the same ports. Proceed time is not authorized for travel directed under

orders issued by the Air Force. Army officers and enlisted personnel are authorized proceed time consistent with their needs and unit operational requirements.

We discussed our findings with officials at Norfolk and they expressed the following opinions: (1) present regulations need clarification, (2) proceed time usually is unneeded on local transfers but should be authorized if members relocate households or furnish other justification, and (3) officers and enlisted members should be treated equally.

TRAVEL TIME

The manual specifies that officers and enlisted personnel shall not receive travel time on transfers between stations within the same metropolitan area. While this instruction is reasonably explicit, personnel officers apply it differently because the manual does not define metropolitan area. As a result, some members receive 1 day travel time while others do not receive any, even though their transfers are between activities at the same location.

Personnel officers at the activities we visited are using eight different definitions of metropolitan area to establish travel time entitlements. Examples follow.

- Officers on the U.S.S. INDEPENDENCE are allowed travel time on transfers to stations outside the corporate limits of Norfolk. However, enlisted members are not unless the distance exceeds 25 miles.
- The Flag Administrative Unit allows travel time for officers and enlisted personnel when distances between stations exceed 1 mile and travel is performed by common carrier, but allows no time for travel performed by private auto unless the distance exceeds 150 miles.

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Base Personnel Manual

If similar inconsistencies exist at other locations where Navy has large concentrations of ships and stations, many personnel may or may not be getting proceed and travel time when transferring under identical conditions. We believe this could affect morale. Although our tests were limited, the results indicate that many activities automatically grant proceed and travel time to all personnel, whether or not a valid need exists. This could result in substantial lost time.

We believe the Navy should reevaluate its proceed time policies and clarify pay and personnel instructions to assure uniform application. We also believe the Navy should provide disbursing and personnel officers a definition of the term "metropolitan area". Generally, this includes any area outside the corporate limits of a city serviced by local common carrier.

We would appreciate your comments and advice of actions taken on the above matters.

Sincerely yours,

J. R. Dunwiddie

For C. H. Moore
Regional Manager

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