

INFORMATION PAPER

ATZT-JA

2 April 2008

SUBJECT: Department of Defense Premium Travel Program

1. **PURPOSE.** To provide information on Department of Defense premium class travel requirements.
2. **BLUF:** DoD Policy requires coach (economy) class travel accommodations be used when performing official government travel. Premium Class travel at government expense is permitted on an exception basis only. Requests for premium class travel must be fully justified in accordance with the Joint Travel Regulation (JTR) (DoD Civilians) or the Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR)(uniformed services). Use of premium class travel accommodations must be authorized in advance of the actual travel unless extenuating circumstances or emergency situations prevent advance authorization. Blanket authorization and justification for premium travel is prohibited. Authorization must be applied for and obtained on a case-by-case basis.

3. DEFINITIONS:

- **Coach Class:** The basic class of accommodations offered to travelers regardless of fare paid. Also referred to as "tourist" or "economy class". Any class of service regardless of name, that exceeds the cost and/or luxury level of coach-class accommodations must be treated as premium-class travel.
- **Premium Class:** Any class of transportation service above coach, such as business class or first class.
- **First Class:** Generally the highest class of accommodation offered by the airlines in terms of cost and amenities and termed "first class" by the airline and any reservation system.
- **Business Class:** A premium class of accommodation offered by the airlines that is higher than coach and lower than first class in both cost and amenities.

4. DISCUSSION.

a. General.

- Travel by common carrier air transportation is generally the most cost efficient and expeditious way to travel. It is Government policy that members and/or dependents who use commercial air carriers on official business must use coach-class accommodations.
- Members should determine travel requirements in sufficient time to use coach-class accommodations.
- First-class accommodations may be used only as permitted in JFTR, par. U3125-B3.
- Premium-class other than first-class accommodations may be used only as permitted in JFTR, par. U3125-B4.
- Authorization for all premium-class accommodations use should be made in advance of the travel unless extenuating/emergency circumstances make authorization impossible. In these cases, the member must request written approval from the appropriate authority as soon as possible after the travel.
- When an airline flight has only two classes of service, the higher class of service, regardless of the term used, is "first class."

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- When travel in premium class accommodations has been authorized military personnel should avoid wearing the uniform, unless appropriate, to avoid the public perception of misuse of government travel resources.

b. Exceptions: Premium-class use maybe authorized/approved only when:

- Regularly scheduled flights between the authorized origin and destination points (including connection points) provide only premium-class accommodations, and the member certifies this circumstance on the travel voucher.
- Space is not available in coach-class accommodations on any scheduled flight in time to accomplish the purpose of the official travel, which is so urgent it cannot be postponed.
- Necessary to accommodate a traveler's disability or other physical impairment, if the condition is substantiated in writing by competent medical authority.
- The accommodations are required for security purposes or because exceptional circumstances, as determined in accordance with Service regulations, make their use essential to the successful performance of the mission.
- Coach-class accommodations on foreign carriers do not provide adequate sanitation or meet health standards and foreign flag carrier service use is approved in accordance with the Fly America Act.
- The accommodations would result in an overall savings to the Government based on economic considerations (e.g., the avoidance of additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time) that would be incurred while awaiting coach-class accommodations.
- Obtained as an accommodations upgrade through the redemption of frequent traveler benefits.
- The member's transportation is paid in full through Services/Defense Agency acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source.
- Travel is direct between authorized origin and destination points (one of which is OCONUS) which are separated by several time zones, and the scheduled flight time (including stopovers) is in excess of 14 hours. Scheduled flight time is the time between the scheduled airline departure from the PDS/TDYpoint until the scheduled airline arrival at the TDY point/PDS.
- It is Army policy that Soldiers who receive on-the-spot upgrades (unsolicited) to premium accommodations without cost to the government may accept the upgrade and travel while in uniform. However, senior military and civilian officials who receive on-the-spot upgrades (unsolicited) to premium accommodations should never accept such upgrades while in uniform, IAW Army Directive 2007-01. Senior officials for purposes of the Army Directive are defined as General or Flag Officers, civilian employees in the Senior Executive Service or equivalent, and higher-level employees.

c. Documentation Requirements:

- Orders. Travel orders authorizing premium-class accommodations should be annotated "(first/premium class or premium-class other than first-class) authorized by (cite reference)."

When the travel orders do not authorize premium accommodations use, first/premium class or premium-class other than first-class service may be provided if the original order, and copies thereof, are annotated that ("first/premium class or premium-class other than first-class issued, only first/premium class or premium class other than first-class available between authorized origin and destination points.")

- Travel Voucher. Specific authorization/approval must be attached to, or stated on, the voucher and kept for the record. When regularly scheduled flights between the authorized origin and destination (including connection points) provide only premium-class accommodations, the member must certify these circumstances on the voucher. ***In the absence of authorization/approval, the member is liable for all additional costs resulting from premium-class air accommodations use.***

d. Officials Who May Authorize/Approve Premium-Class Air Accommodations Use. The officials listed below may authorize first-class air accommodations use by members under their jurisdiction. This authority may be re-delegated; however, delegation or re-delegation must be held to as high an administrative level as practicable to ensure adequate consideration and review of the circumstances necessitating the first-class accommodations.

- Department of Defense, see DoDD 4500.9 (Transportation and Traffic Management);
 - The Secretary of Health and Human Services;
 - The Director, USNOAA Corps; and
 - The Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Transportation.
- Appropriate authority, in accordance with Service regulations, may authorize/approve premium-class other than first-class accommodations, except for travel using Coast Guard funds. Only the Commandant/Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard may authorize/approve premium-class other than first-class accommodations use.
- Only the Secretary of the Army can approve first-class travel.
 - Army Policy requires requests for premium class travel to be processed through the HQDA Executive Travel Office (JDSO-ZT) to the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army (AASA).

5. Questions regarding the subject matter of this information paper should be addressed to the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Administrative Law Division at 573-596-0626.

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approved
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