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The Secretary of the Army



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## DoD Passport and Visa Office Newsletter



**Andrew Hare, Director**

Hello everyone and welcome to 2016! It's unbelievable that the transition of the Passports and Visas mission was implemented almost 120 days ago and that the 2015 Holiday season has already passed us by as we hurtle toward Spring. I want to discuss a couple things in this issue of the newsletter, but first a thank you to all of the dedicated Soldiers, civilians and contractors in the Directorate of Executive Travel tasked to keep the Passports and Visas mission running smoothly. I have been absolutely amazed at the quality of personnel within this mission both within DET and those of you in the many passport offices across the world. Over the last few months I have been repeat-

edly impressed with the loyalty, dedication and teamwork of all of you as I become a little more educated every day. Although I knew coming into the transition that this mission is vital to the conduct of DoD business, I have learned specifically how important what you do every day truly is to our senior leaders and workforce. I hope you take pride in this mission as with all of the missions within DET. Thank you to all who have made my first four months in this role successful. Directors sometimes receive far too much credit for the hard work of their personnel and I honestly can tell you that I know that it's each of you that our success depends upon.

I'm very excited to present this edition of the newsletter which will now be a quarterly publication. With the implementation and growth of Passport Matters being able to provide critical information on a daily basis, I believe the newsletter better serves as a communications device on

a quarterly basis to update and summarize where we've been and where we plan to go. In late February and (or) early March, the next major deployment of the Visa and Passport Automated System (VPAS) will be released. This release is the culmination of months of hard work by some very smart people within DET working closely with IT experts and State Department personnel to ensure that it provides the level of information required by DoD. I know change can be worrisome and that there will be trepidation with the new system, but let me explain briefly why this needs to be done. As the DoD Executive Agent for Passports and Visas, it is absolutely essential that DET be able to track all actions for many reasons. First and foremost is to increase our customer support to everyone and I believe the new version will do that.

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## Directors Message (Cont)

Secondly and just as critical is to capture data metrics at every level and be able to report to DoD senior leadership the costs and level of effort associated with the program world-wide. Right now, DET can track only about 80% of all actions processed to the State Department and there are holes even in that data. My goal is that the new VPAS and standardized method of application processing will get us to roughly 96% visibility by Summer 2016. This visibility is critical in determining where resource shortfalls and trends exist, the costs of doing business in every aspect of the process and how we can provide reports back to individual passport agents on their own operations and hopefully help them defend their resources assigned to this program. From an educational standpoint, the data metrics will

also eventually be able to provide our customer base with processing times for specific countries and better develop streamlined approaches to stretch our limited personnel and money resources. Again, I know what change means for understaffed organizations and the worry that comes with it. But, we are dedicated here in DET to ensuring that VPAS is a tool for the future that will continue to evolve and develop into the single tool for not only this directorate, but also one that helps passport offices everywhere better do their jobs and defend or justify resources assigned. My personnel are learning and testing the tool repeatedly as this process continues to ensure the best possible product is released. What we don't get exactly right this time, will continue to be improved. We also

are dedicated to working with everyone to help make the change as seamless as possible and teach how the new program can be used locally to produce quality and meaningful metrics. Thank you for your patience and understanding during the recent transitional process. I continue to pledge my support to our customer base that we are moving forward in the right direction every day to make this successful program easier to utilize and speed the process of application delivery in every phase of the program. I hope you enjoy a healthy and productive Spring and I hope to talk to you soon to provide another update on some of the progress we continue to make.

## Travel Services Division

Happy New Year to everyone from the employees of Travel Services Division.

Unfortunately, we start off the year saying good bye to Mr. Lionel Norman from Visa Branch. Mr. Norman started working in Logistics Services Washington as an Army soldier. He transitioned into civilian life working in the Visa Branch as a courier, one of our UAE SMEs and our main backup in data entry. We will miss his expertise and wish him continued success working back in his home state of Ohio where is moving to this month. Best of luck.

Germany is now only taking visa applications directly from the Department of State (DoS). This adds in an extra step in the process as we now will take all visa applications for Germany to SIA on our courier run and they will then take them to the embassy for us for processing. This will be transparent to our customers, but will add an additional 2 days to the

turnaround time. Please keep this in mind when requesting visas from Germany.

Processing time for Iraqi visas is still taking longer than we would like. We think it is due to the internal personnel turn over at the Iraqi Embassy. We believe the personnel situation there has been resolved, but request you submit any visas applications for Iraq as far in advance as possible.

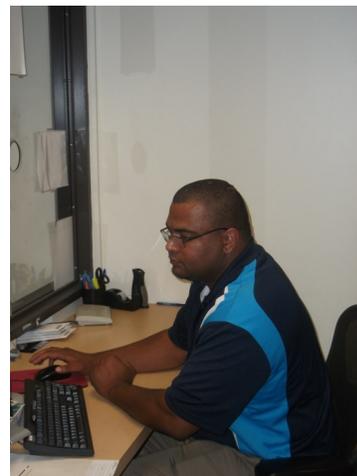
Recommend any unit deployments who are requesting everyone to receive an official passport have the organizational POC contact us after they have performed their mission analysis. This will allow us to discuss the way forward before the actual applications are sent into Department of State for adjudication. DoS has received numerous applications and some have been put into suspense because they are lacking the proper documentation to be approved. If the documentation is correct upfront, it will allow DoS to process the applications faster.

We have witnessed an increase of customers

coming to pick up their completed passport at Fort Belvoir who do not possess the proper identification. Please do not confuse this with proof of American citizenship which is required to apply.

The types of identification acceptable when receiving an official US passports are as follows:

- Previous or current US passport book
  - Previous or current US passport card
  - Driver's license (not temporary or learner's license)
  - Military identification cards
  - Federal or state government employee identification cards
- Temporary or altered documents are not acceptable.**



Mr. Lionel Norman hard at work at the front counter prior to his departure

## Customer Service Operations

After several months of development and testing, the new Visa/Passport Application System (VPAS) will be deployed within the next month. Key points of note include: (1) this change will impact every DoD Passport Acceptance Agent; (2) deployment of the new VPAS will occur in three phases; and (3) policy/guidance directing VPAS utilization is forthcoming.

Login records from VPAS show that most DoD passport agents do not use nor have not logged into VPAS. Reasoning for this is that the only benefit to the agent was tracking the status of visa requests. With the deployment of the new and improved VPAS, all passport agents will be required to use VPAS to fill out the web-based DD Form 1056 with a barcode for every passport (fee where authorized and no-fee), visa requests, and for OCONUS facilities, to include Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA). The new VPAS will be the system of record for all passport and visa matters.

Members of the DoD Passport and Visa Office, as well as selected passport agents are currently testing the new process and have found areas that require additional devel-

opment prior to deployment and a few changes that will be added as updates after deployment. Presently, the first phase is scheduled to be deployed at the end of January 2016 primarily to the passport agents currently assisting with VPAS testing. Deployment of the second phase with scheduled to occur mid- to late February 2016 and will focus on the CONUS based teams. Deployment of the third phase is scheduled for late Spring to early Summer and will focus on OCONUS teams.

New guidance governing the use of VPAS and an updated DoD Manual (DoDM) 1000.21-R are both in the final stages of staffing. When published, DoDM 1000.21 will be replace DoD 1000.21-R. In the interim, a memorandum from the DoD Executive agent implementing the use of VPAS as the system of record for all passport and visa related matters and directing all DoD Passport Acceptance Agents to use the web-based DD Form 1056. This change will aid the DoD Passport and Visa Office to better track requests for passport services. As the Executive Agent for Passport and Passport Services, we are required to accurately report all transactions to DoD leadership. Use of the new web-based DD Form 1056 will not change any other business process at your facility.

Security requirements for the system is the normal DoD IT vulnerability testing. In addition, VPAS access will be restricted to agents that are CAC holders, assigned to a DoS certified Acceptance Facility, have a current DoS issued agent ID, and an a DoD enterprise email account. This level of security, by definition, will not permit any transfer of transactions from one agent to another, nor is there a requirement for a facility manager report. The exception to this is for prospective new agents. New agents will be able to sign up for training, but will not have rights to any of the processes until DoS issues the agent ID number.

To assist in the deployment process, the DoD Passport and Visa Office will conduct several desk top, web-based training events. Dates and times of these events will be posted on Passport Matters using Defense Collaboration Services, which provides the ability to share conferencing events with users in any number of locations.

Agents can participate in the web-based DD 1056 training at the following link: <https://conference.apps.mil/web-conf/75bb8d1f7f3f189c095051d178652564>. Click the link or copy it to your browser (CAC access is required). Select the CAC email certificate.

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## Customer Service Operations (Cont)

The audio bridge is limited to 25 callers. An alternative to the audio bridge is the system's chat function. If necessary, local IT help desk support may be required to allow access to Java updates.

As part of the transition, all previously stored VPAS data may not be migrated, largely due to the significant number of agents that have not logged into VPAS. These agents may be required to log in as a new agent. If so, the new agent will be required to upload Proof

of Citizenship, Affidavit, Command Appointment Letter, and Clearance Verification. If these documents are not on hand, do use the time between now and the full roll out to obtain needed documents. Once verified by the DoD Passport and Visa Office, access will be granted.

Once logged in, agents can view the agent dashboard. This dashboard will allow agent to accurately track all transactions submitted by their facility. Agents will still have to contact customer service at the Passport

and Visa Office for passport status checks. Agents will see the current visa status for each submitted request as it moves through to completion. Agents will also have a profile page that will show current information from DoS. Other functionalities for the profile page are in development.

Non CAC holder agents and commanders in remote locations, where no DoD Passport Acceptance Agent is within commuting distance, there is no change to the process currently in place.

## Important Reminders

- Always review the requirements for a visa application on DOD PASSPORT MATTERS website to insure that all required documents and instructions are followed per the individual countries guidance are followed.
- All passport applications should be mailed via traceable mail to the Dept of State mail facility for your organization type. Passport applications should not be sent to DET for processing. Any applications sent to DET that have not been pre-coordinated as critical and do not contain the correct memo will be returned to the agent facility for mail out to the Dept. of State .
- Facility inspections must be coordinated in a timely manner, DET will send out 2 emails; an initial request to the agent or agents, the second will be to the facility manager and all agents. If there is no response to the first or subsequent email requests DET will recommend temporary suspension of the facility pending inspection.