



# Department of Veterans Affairs

## **Financial Policy**

### **Volume XIV**

#### **Travel**

### **Chapter 6**

#### **International Travel**

**Approved:**

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## 0601 Overview

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) financial policies for international (foreign) travel. Travelers should familiarize themselves with the information contained in this chapter before initiating travel outside the United States (U.S.) and its territories. Foreign travel is subject to all the requirements contained in Title 41, Subsection F, Code of Federal Regulations (41 C.F.R), Chapters 300 through 304; 22 C.F.R., PART 51, Passports; and VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Travel.

Key points covered in this chapter:

- VA employees representing VA on official travel to a foreign area are required to:
  - Initiate a request for all foreign area travel using the Foreign Travel Portal by obtaining Supervisor or Service Chief approval on VA Form 0900, Foreign Travel Country Clearance Application, and submit no later than 60 calendar days in advance of the travel departure date, or 90 calendar days in advance if travel involves approved telework;
  - Submit a foreign travel approved VA Form 0900, via email to VA Financial Services Center (FSC), no later than 30 calendar days in advance of commencing travel to allow for country clearance and required visas to be obtained;
  - Perform travel while in an official duty status; and
  - Conduct travel activities under an approved travel authorization (TA);
- Any foreign travel request combining personal travel with official foreign travel will be disallowed if the number of personal days exceeds the number of official travel days;
- Travelers on official foreign travel using a Government passport may not enter the destination foreign country until the country clearance is obtained;
- VA executive officials, at or above the rank of Assistant Secretaries (or their equivalent) are required to submit a foreign travel proposal/request to the National Security Staff of the White House for approval (Section 060510); and
- VA employees having a "Secret" or higher security clearance must notify the Office of Operations and Security Preparedness (OSP) when they will be out of the country on either personal or official Government travel.

## 0602 Revisions

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Various	Reformatted to new policy format, reorganized policy subsections, and completed a 5-year review.	Office of Financial Policy (OFP) (047G)	Leadership organizational change.	July 2020

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
0601 Overview	Added passport regulations, and key points covered in this chapter.	OFP (047G)	Leadership organizational change and General Update.	July 2020
0603 Definitions	Updated to reflect current definitions.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
0604 Roles and Responsibilities	Updated to reflect all Financial Services Center roles and responsibilities regarding passports and foreign travel reporting, and VA Form 0900 approval roles.	OFP (047G)	Leadership change and General Update.	July 2020
060501 General Rules	Added guidance on abiding laws while performing foreign travel; ethics requirements; dangerous country and safe travel; and foreign travel security briefing requirements.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
060502 VA Form 0900, Foreign Travel Country Clearance Application	Consolidated all VA Form 0900 policy requirements in this section. Changed VA Form 0900 name.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
060503 Foreign Travel Portal	Added use of Foreign Travel Portal is mandatory for all foreign area travel and provide policy guidance on portal requirements.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
060504 Approval of Foreign Travel	Added foreign travel requires an official duty status; authorized absence is not an official duty status; Approving Officials are required to ensure employees performing foreign area travel are in an official duty status; and consolidated policy for approving foreign travel VA wide.	OFP (047G)	Office of General Counsel guidance; Leadership change; Rescission of VHA's Foreign Travel Handbook, 1400.06.	July 2020
060505 Issuance of a Government Passport	Consolidated and updated policy on issuance and use requirements, including Permanent Change of Station (PCS) dependents.	OFP (047G)	Leadership change.	July 2020
060506 Government Passport Applications	Consolidated and improved guidance on application requirements. Added guidance on passport requirements for children authorized PCS. Added guidance on denial of a Government passport including guidance on an employee in arrears on child support.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
060507 Visa Requirements	Consolidated visa requirements and updated photo guidance. Added the requirement for a transit-visa.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
060508 Lost or Stolen Government Passports	Moved information under a specific section.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
060509 Teleworking in a Foreign Country	Moved information under a specific section.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
060510 National Security Requirements of Executive Officials	Moved information under previous Appendix H here as a specific section.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
0606 Authorities and References	Updated current law and references.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
0607 Rescissions	Rescinded Vol XIV Ch 6, International Travel dated August 2015.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
0608 Questions	Updated contact information, passport office email change.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
Appendices	Previous Appendices removed or moved into new policy sections: B moved to Section 060505; C removed; D removed; E and F moved to 060507; H moved to 060510.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
Appendix A	Moved previous revision history here.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
Appendix B	Moved previous Appendix A to B; updated criteria and positions authorized to approve foreign travel.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020
Appendix C	Added VHA foreign travel approval routing procedures.	OFP (047G)	Rescission of VHA's Foreign Travel Handbook, 1400.06.	July 2020
Appendix D	Moved previous Appendix G here and updated travel guidance.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	July 2020

Refer to Appendix A, Revision History for previous revision history.

## 0603 Definitions

**Dangerous Country** – Dangerous countries are those where travel warnings have been issued by the Department of State (DoS) (refer to DoS Travel Advisories website). Travel warnings are issued when conditions in a certain country or location might affect traveler safety and security. The list of identified countries changes frequently.

**Diplomatic Government Passport** – A Government passport issued by Special Issuance Agency (SIA) at their discretion, to certain officers and employees of the U.S. government and their dependents who are traveling abroad on diplomatic duties.

**Embassy** – The official diplomatic office that represents a country within another country (e.g., the U.S. Embassy in Canada represents the U.S. in matters involving the two countries).

**Foreign Country** – For foreign travel considerations, any country or government not part of the U.S. is considered a foreign country. The U.S. is defined by all 50 states, the District of Columbia, its U.S. Territories and Possessions to include the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**Foreign Government** – A non-U.S. governmental entity; any international or multinational organization whose membership is composed of non-US governmental entities; and anyone acting as an agent or representative of a non-US governmental entity, an international organization or a multinational organization.

**Government Passport** – A travel document issued by SIA, attesting to the identity and nationality of the bearer for the sole purpose of representing the Government on official matters in a foreign area country. A Government passport is either issued as an Official or Diplomatic passport.

**Invitation** – An official document inviting an employee to visit a country representing VA for a specified purpose.

**Number of Days** – The number of foreign travel days will include holidays and weekends and any days away from the facility that occur within the approved travel period. The number of foreign travel days is not prorated or reduced in any way because of a part-time appointment.

**Official Duty Status** – A work status indicating that the employee is in an official capacity related to the duties of their position.

**Official Government Passport** – Issued to officials or employees of the U.S. government and their dependents who are traveling abroad on official duties.

**Official Travel** – Travel under an approved TA to and from an employee’s official station or other authorized points of departure and a temporary duty location, travel between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of VA.

**Outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS)** – Includes both foreign areas and non-foreign areas:

1. Foreign areas are any area including the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, situated both outside the continental U.S. (48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia) and the non-foreign areas.
2. Non-foreign areas include the states of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the territories and possessions of the U.S. (excludes the former Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, which are considered foreign areas for the purposes of 41 C.F.R.).

**Special Issuance Agency (SIA)** – SIA is an agency within DoS, located in Washington, DC, responsible for issuing no fee Government Official or Diplomatic passports to citizens traveling to a foreign area for the U.S. Government, their dependents (if authorized), and certain others who are exempt by law from payment of a passport fee.

#### **0604 Roles and Responsibilities**

**Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs (SECVA)** is responsible for authorizing foreign travel for Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials.

**Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer (VA CFO)** is responsible for authorizing foreign travel for SECVA.

**Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Other Key Officials, Principal Deputy Under Secretaries, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Network Directors, and Medical Center Directors** are responsible for authorizing foreign travel of their employees per Appendix B, Designation of Foreign Travel Approval.

**VA Financial Services Center (FSC)** responsibilities include:

- Final review and signature on VA Form 0900;
- Administering all operational actions related to the Government passport process, including the accountability of all VA Government passports issued;
- Documenting approved Permanent Change of Station (PCS) TAs to substantiate foreign travel approval has been obtained; and
- Providing annual reporting of all foreign travel to DoS.

**Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness (OSP)** is responsible for coordinating with the National Security Staff of the White House to obtain approval for all

foreign travel proposals/requests by executive branch officials at or above the rank of Assistant Secretaries (or their equivalent), on behalf of the VA executive employees.

**Foreign Travel Approving Officials** are responsible for authorizing in advance all official travel to foreign areas.

**Approving Officials (AO)** are responsible for completing required travel training, being knowledgeable of the employee's travel plans, ensuring travelers are under official duty travel status before approving TAs.

**Travelers** will be knowledgeable of 41 C.F.R., VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices); minimize costs, ensure travel is approved in advance; arrange travel using VA's travel system; comply with VA's travel charge card program guidance in VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program; submit all travel claims on time, and return their Government passport to FSC within 5 business days upon return to the official station.

**Chief of Mission (COM)** is usually the U.S. Ambassador or U.S. embassy employee designated with the responsibility for determining whether to grant Government employees on official travel entry into a foreign country on behalf of the U.S. embassy located in the destination country. Approves Domestic Employee Telework Overseas arrangements before granting entry.

**National Security Office of the White House** is responsible for approving foreign travel proposals/requests for executive branch officials at or above the rank of Assistant Secretaries (or their equivalent).

## **0605 Policies**

### **060501 General Policies**

- A. Foreign travel for all VA employees is a privilege that carries responsibility, accountability, and risk. All VA employees are required to obey the laws of the foreign area while on official travel.
- B. All travelers to a foreign area will represent the VA consistent with 5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch.
- C. Before initiating a request for foreign travel, travelers are required to determine if the foreign area location is deemed a dangerous country using the DoS Travel Advisories website. Travel to dangerous countries and locations should only be approved and undertaken after careful consideration of the associated risks. DoS determines final approval for travel to dangerous countries and may deny country clearance.

- D. VA employees performing travel to a foreign area can refer to Appendix D, Department of State Tips for Foreign Travel for information on ensuring a safe trip.
- E. FSC will notify OSP of each employee traveling out of the country on official Government business. Based upon the destination country, OSP will provide the appropriate country briefing to the employee.
- F. VA employees having a “Secret” or higher security clearance are required to pre-report all their foreign travel plans for both personal and official Government travel, under the Office of Director of National Intelligence, Security Executive Agent 3, reporting requirements. They must notify (pre-report) OSP via email at [vanat@va.gov](mailto:vanat@va.gov). Questions regarding a security clearance as it relates to this reporting requirement may be directed to OSP via email at [vanat@va.gov](mailto:vanat@va.gov).
- G. Foreign area TA's should be created in VA's travel system as early as practical but will not be released for AO approval by the FSC until all required foreign travel approvals are obtained and the TA is compliant with 41 C.F.R. and VA policy.
- H. Travelers may contact FSC via email at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov), or call 202-461-5080 to obtain assistance on creating a foreign area TA in VA's travel system.

#### **060502 VA Form 0900, Foreign Travel Country Clearance Application**

- A. Submission of VA Form 0900 using the Foreign Travel Portal is mandatory for all VA OCONUS foreign area travel.
- B. Travelers must obtain the appropriate foreign travel approval level(s) on VA Form 0900 as identified in Appendix B, Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel.
- C. VA Form 0900 required initial submission timelines are as follows:
  - 1. For temporary duty travel (TDY), use of a Government passport, or issuance of a visa and/or transit-visa, requires submission no later than 60 calendar days before the scheduled departure date, or 90 calendar days in advance if the TDY involves approved telework. The decision to expedite the processing of an application resides with SIA. To receive a 2-3 week or less turn-around, VA is required to provide a justification to SIA when requesting expedited service for a Government passport and include a travel itinerary.
  - 2. For PCS, employees (and their immediate family members, when applicable) will be notified by FSC to use the Foreign Travel Portal to submit VA Form 0900 no later than 90 calendar days in advance of the PCS departure date.

- D. VA Form 0900 is initially prepared to seek approval for foreign travel following Appendix B, Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel, and is required to contain the following information when initiated in the Foreign Travel Portal:
- Name, title and grade of the traveler;
  - Date of departure from the U.S., and approximate date of return;
  - Purpose of trip;
  - Cost and funding details;
  - Traveler's signature; and
  - Supervisor or Service Chief approval of foreign travel.
- E. Employees will submit a separate approved VA Form 0900 application for each non-concurrent travel assignment. Employees who have multiple, concurrent TDY foreign travel can submit all travel dates/assignments on one VA Form 0900.
- F. Within three (3) business days of receiving a submitted VA Form 0900, FSC will review each form and provide an instruction email to the traveler including the specific documents required to facilitate Government passport and visa processing. All identified documents are required to be provided as instructed and the completed VA Form 0900, with all required foreign travel approval signatures from the traveler's organization, shall be submitted to FSC no later than 30 calendar days in advance of commencing travel.
- G. FSC will review each submitted VA Form 0900, to:
1. Determine the documents required for inclusion in the traveler's instruction email.
  2. Ensure the number of personal days involved in the foreign travel does not exceed the number of official travel days
  3. Review the funding information provided to verify the entire cost of the trip is funded. Certain VA funding such as medical care appropriated funds, research appropriated funds, and grant funds require specific funding approval documentation.
  4. Identify any non-VA donated funding requiring a completed VA Form 0893, Advance Review of Offer to Donate Support for Official Travel.
  5. Determine if an application for Government passport needs to be submitted; which DoS application form is required; if a visa application or a transit-visa will be required; and the type of processing required (i.e., routine or expedited). Should a Government passport application require a tourist passport to be submitted as evidence of citizenship, FSC will instruct the traveler to provide an extra prepaid UPS shipping label if the traveler needs their tourist passport returned before dispatch of their Government passport.

6. Determine if a traveler is required to report to an embassy for fingerprinting to obtain a visa (this is usually at the Embassy's request). FSC will advise travelers in the instruction email if this requirement is applicable, based on their travel location.
  7. Determine if the employee intends to telework and provide instructions for the DoS Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) clearance requirements.
  8. Determine if the traveler is a Senior Executive and provide instructions for compliance with the National Security requirements for Executive Officials.
- H. When FSC receives the requested documents from the traveler, e.g. organizational approved VA Form 0900 per Appendix B, Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel, citizenship documentation, signed application and/or visa, photos, etc. as required, they will:
- process applicable passport applications; and
  - request required visas from the respective Foreign Embassy.
- I. FSC Executive Director, Financial Services Center is responsible for conducting a final review verifying the travel episode meets all requirements in this chapter and 41 C.F.R. Chapters 300 – 400, as applicable for the travel episode, before signing the VA Form 0900. FSC will attach the completed form to the traveler's TA in VA's travel system and provide a copy to the traveler.
- J. A completed VA Form 0900 allows the FSC to proceed with requesting the country clearance from the COM at the applicable U.S. Embassy in the destination foreign country.
1. Once the country clearance is granted any requested visas issued by the respective Foreign Embassy will be released and obtained by the FSC.
  2. FSC will then release the TA in VA's travel system for approval by the AO.
  3. FSC will dispatch the travel documents to the traveler once the TA is approved but may dispatch the documents before the TA is approved as an exception when the FSC determines earlier dispatch is warranted or required.
- K. If a traveler's itinerary changes, the traveler is required to submit a revised VA Form 0900 notifying FSC of the change. The revised 0900 is required to be approved by the Supervisor or Service Chief before submission to FSC. FSC is required to notify the COM at the appropriate U.S. Embassy in the foreign country involved of itinerary changes and amend the country clearance request as appropriate.
- L. FSC will only release Government passports to a traveler after receiving confirmation the traveler has been granted country clearance and any required

visa(s) have been obtained, but no sooner than 15 days in advance of the departure date. Travelers who are on official U.S. Government business under an approved TA may not enter a foreign area country until clearance is obtained and they have possession of the required Government passport containing any required visas.

### **060503 Foreign Travel Portal**

- A. VA employees directed to perform either TDY or PCS travel and their dependents who are authorized to relocate to a foreign area are required to use the Foreign Travel Portal to:
- Obtain pertinent information to process a foreign travel request;
  - Submit VA Form 0900 Foreign Travel Country Clearance Application to obtain clearance to enter the destination foreign country;
  - Obtain (TDY and PCS) guidance on which Senior Executive is required to approve VA Form 0900 (refer to Section 060504);
  - Track the status of each foreign travel request; and
  - Obtain a record of all foreign travel performed.
- B. Travelers who are non-U.S. citizens or are contractors or volunteers are still required to use the Foreign Travel Portal to submit VA Form 0900 to FSC to obtain clearance to enter the destination foreign country. They are required to obtain the required level(s) of approval for foreign travel per Appendix B, Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel, and Section 060504.
- C. Travel to an OCONUS non-foreign area generally does not require the use of the Foreign Travel Portal unless transportation to the non-foreign area involves a stopover in a foreign area requiring a transit-visa (e.g., travel to Guam involving a flight stopover in Japan).
- D. Data from the Foreign Travel Portal will be used to prepare the DoS annual report on VA foreign travel.

### **060504 Approval of Foreign Area Travel**

- A. Requests for foreign travel approval are required to be processed with sufficient lead time, usually 60 through 90 calendar days unless extenuating circumstances apply, to allow for review, concurrence, and approval by the appropriate official(s). Refer to Appendix B, Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel required level(s) of approval.
- B. VA employees are required to be in an official duty status while performing authorized travel to a foreign area and have an approved TA. Authorized Absence is not considered an official duty status; therefore VA employees will not be approved for foreign travel using Authorized Absence as a leave status.

- C. AOs are required to ensure all VA employees are in an official duty status when performing official travel to a foreign area before approving TAs.
- D. VA Form 0900 is used to document approval of Foreign area travel requests.
  - 1. VHA TDY foreign area travel approval will be obtained following VHA procedures contained in Appendix C, Veterans Health Administration Approval.
  - 2. Non-VHA TDY foreign area travel approval will be obtained using the routing method established by the traveler's organization.
- E. The number of days on annual leave in conjunction with the official foreign travel request may not exceed the number of days performing official foreign travel duties. If the balance between official travel duties and annual leave appears inappropriate, the foreign travel request will be disapproved.
- F. If a VA employee is denied foreign travel approval of a submitted VA Form 0900, they are required to notify FSC immediately. Approval questions or denial are to be directed via email to FSC at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov), or by calling 202-461-5080.
- G. To obtain country clearance, required visas, and dispatch of a Government passport to the traveler before commencing travel, foreign area travel approval is required to be provided to FSC no later than 30 calendar days in advance of the travel departure date, as follows:
  - 1. For TDY, the VA Form 0900 is required to be provided with the required level of approval signatures per Appendix B, Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel.
  - 2. For PCS, FSC will obtain an approved TA for the PCS employee, listing each immediate family member authorized to accompany the employee to a foreign area permanent duty station.

### **060505 Government Passport Applications**

- A. Once a traveler initiates a request for foreign area travel in the Foreign Travel Portal, FSC will determine if a valid Government passport exists, or if an application is required to be completed by the traveler.
- B. FSC will provide specific guidance to PCS employees with relocating dependents on the Government passport application requirements for their dependents.
- C. FSC will process the dependent's application for a Government passport and obtain any required visas.

- D. A currently issued Government passport will require a renewal application if its expiration date does not have more than six (6) months validity beyond the projected departure date to the respective foreign country. When personal travel is planned in conjunction with foreign official travel the same six (6) month validity requirement applies when using a tourist passport.
- E. FSC will identify the appropriate DoS U.S. passport application and procedures, as applicable, in their instruction email to the traveler. For Government passport photo requirements refer to the DoS Photo Requirements website.
- F. FSC requires all applicants who are holders of a tourist U.S. passport or have been issued a Government passport which is expiring, along with their supervisors, to ensure documentation is submitted to their respective facility foreign travel coordinator within two (2) weeks from the date the VA Form 0900 was submitted.
- G. Government passport applications are time-sensitive as they expire 15 days after the date signed. Form DS-82: Application for Passport by Mail is required to be signed and dated the same day it is provided to the facility foreign travel coordinator.
- H. Facility foreign travel coordinators are to submit all required documentation to FSC within two (2) business days.
- I. Applicants will need to contact FSC for instructions when the following conditions exist:
- Their previously issued Government passport has less than six (6) months validity;
  - They do not have a tourist U.S. passport to document U.S. citizenship; or
  - They are not willing to provide their tourist passport.
- J. FSC is responsible for coordinating with SIA and applicable embassies to obtain Government passports and visas, respectively.
- K. SIA may deny, or restrict a Government passport, as specified under 22 C.F.R. §51.60, Denial, and restriction of passports. VA provides the following guidance concerning child support issues specified in 22 C.F.R. §51.60(a)(2).
1. SIA may revoke, restrict, or limit a Government passport issued previously (refer to Social Security Act § 452(k)) to an employee who has been reported as being in arrears on child support payments.
  2. Travelers should contact the appropriate State Child Support Enforcement Agency to make payment arrangements before applying for or using a previously issued Government passport.
  3. It can take 2-3 weeks from the time an applicant has made payment arrangements with the State agency until the applicant's name has been removed

from the electronic list. Applicants may refer to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services', State Child Support Agency Passport Denial Program Contacts website.

- L. Travelers who are local to the Washington, DC area, may hand-deliver, or send their application and supporting documents to the address below. Non-local travelers or facility foreign travel coordinators should send original documents only by UPS next day air and should track the package (do not use USPS mail) to the following address:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
FSC/ Operations - International Travel Services Division  
810 Vermont Ave NW, 497  
Washington, DC 20420

Travelers may contact FSC via email at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov), or by calling 202-461-5080 with any questions.

#### **060506 Issuance of a Government Passport**

- A. A Government passport is the most valuable document that an employee will carry abroad as it confirms their U.S. citizenship. Additional protections are dependent upon whether an Official or Diplomatic Government passport has been issued, which SIA will provide when issuing the respective Government passport.
- B. Government passports should be kept in a secure location at all times.
- C. FSC passport agents are required to complete SIA scheduled passport agent training to authorize the processing of Government passport applications, and to learn the requirements and process for obtaining country clearance and visas.
- D. FSC will serve as the liaison between the traveler and SIA and applicable foreign embassies. All applications for a new, renewal, or replacement Government passport, or any other passport related service such as obtaining a required visa or country clearance will be coordinated through FSC using the Foreign Travel Portal. FSC will not process an application for a traveler's tourist passport.

SIA will only process applications for Government passports that are submitted by FSC. Travelers who submit applications directly to SIA will have the applications returned or processing suspended.

- E. All VA employees on official TDY to a foreign area, including VA employees on PCS and their dependents who are authorized to relocate to a foreign area, who are U.S. citizens are required to obtain a Government passport.

- F. VA employees or dependents who are not U.S. citizens are not authorized to be issued a Government passport. These travelers are required to use their tourist passport of the foreign country where they hold citizenship for any VA official foreign travel. They are required to obtain necessary visas in their foreign passport directly through the foreign country embassy.
- G. Contractors and volunteers will not be issued a Government passport. They are required to use or obtain a tourist passport and pay the required passport fee. They are required to also obtain any necessary visas directly through the foreign country embassy.
- H. A Government passport is the appropriate travel document for all official foreign area travel. SIA will not accept a U.S. passport card as evidence of citizenship for a Government passport application. A U.S. passport card is designed for the specific needs of border resident communities and is not a globally interoperable travel document as is the traditional passport book.
- I. FSC will notify employees of the passport requirements for the destination country. Employees should not request a Government passport for countries that do not require them (non-foreign areas) unless a transit-visa is required. For travel to a non-foreign area, the employee would travel using a tourist passport. The employee is required to submit a country clearance form for submission by FSC to SIA for travel to non-foreign areas and meet any clearance requirements if teleworking is intended.
- J. An employee, and their dependents on authorized PCS, will only use a Government passport and visas when leaving the U.S. to enter countries where official business will be conducted.
- K. Travelers traveling on a Government passport and travel authority to any country of assignment who anticipate traveling to surrounding countries for personal leave purposes should obtain a current valid tourist passport (blue) only for the personal portion of the travel episode and/or determine in advance the personal entry requirements of each country to ensure they have the required documents and applicable visas for entry. A Government passport is required to be used to enter and exit all official duty destination countries and may not be used for personal leave purposes either within an official duty destination country or for travel to a non-official duty destination country.
- L. Use of a tourist passport by a U.S. citizen when traveling in an official capacity or use of a Government passport when on personal travel, misrepresents the true purpose for which the traveler has entered the country. This situation can have serious and adverse effects on U.S. reciprocal relations with foreign countries as it is considered a violation of sovereignty.

- M. Travelers who are on official U.S. Government business may not enter a foreign area country until clearance is obtained and they have possession of the required Government passport containing any required visas or transit-visa.
- N. If a traveler is denied issuance of a Government passport, visa, or Country Clearance FSC will notify the traveler and the VA POC on the VA Form 0900.
- O. SIA will determine which type of Government passport, an Official or a Diplomatic Government passport, is required to be issued only after receiving a passport application from FSC. Issuance of a Diplomatic Government passport requires proper justification and will only be issued when warranted and may require additional processing time.

Diplomatic Government passports are issued by SIA for:

- Certain officers or employees of the U.S. Government and their dependents who are traveling to a foreign area on diplomatic duties; or
- Permanent Change of Station (PCS) assignments based on the assignment (position) of the traveler. If the PCS traveler is issued a Diplomatic Government passport, each dependent will normally receive a Diplomatic Government passport.

Generally, when SIA issues a Government passport it is valid for 5-years from the date issued but may be issued for shorter periods. Government passports will not be issued beyond the term of an employee's position appointment.

- P. A person may not possess an Official and Diplomatic Government passport simultaneously, unless SIA has approved an exception.
- Q. When FSC dispatches to the traveler a newly issued Government passport the VA employee is required to sign it upon receipt, and ensure their tourist passport if submitted, and any other documents that may have been submitted for the application, are returned with their newly issued Government passport.
- R. Before commencing foreign area travel the employee should make two copies of pages 2 and 3 in their Government passport and any required visa obtained. One copy should be left with a relative or friend in the U.S. and the second copy should accompany the traveler but kept in a separate safe location from the Government passport. It is recommended the traveler carry two extra passport size photos when traveling.
- S. Employees and immediate family members are required to return Government passports to FSC within five (5) days of their return from official foreign travel. Do not return your Government passport by regular mail. Contact FSC via email at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov) to receive instructions for returning your passport to VA.

1. If employees or immediate family members fail or refuse to return the Government passport as required, FSC will inform SIA, which will take all necessary steps to obtain the Government passport. SIA may request assistance from the U.S. Marshals Service, if necessary.
  2. Employees with multiple, non-concurrent TDY foreign travel are required to return the Government passport after each official travel assignment.
- T. FSC is required by SIA to have possession of, and keep in a secure location, all Government passports issued to VA employees or immediate family members when a specific requirement does not exist to perform foreign travel.
- U. To ensure all Government passports are properly accounted for FSC will perform a quarterly audit verifying the presence of all passports.
- V. FSC will return no-fee Government passports to SIA within seven (7) calendar days, after the employee has cleared the VA, or when an issued Government passport has expired. SIA normally destroys returned or expired Government passports; however, they may be canceled and returned for souvenir purposes upon the traveler's request.

### **060507 Visa Requirements**

- A. When required by the foreign area country being visited, travelers are required to have a visa endorsement in their Government passport allowing them entry into the country. Refer to DoS Official and Diplomatic visa Information website for Government passport visa requirements. Visa applications are required to be submitted to FSC, regardless of any alternate submission instruction provided in the DoS website.
- B. VA will request the issuance of a transit-visa when a traveler is required to pass through one country to get to another.
- C. FSC will ensure the traveler's Government passport has or obtains the number of blank visa pages required by the destination foreign country.
- D. Foreign countries may have visa requirements specific to Diplomatic Government passports which may not apply to Official Government or tourist passports.
- E. Granting a visa is solely at the discretion of the country being visited. Visas are often date specific. If after applying for a visa the travel dates change, the traveler will notify the FSC immediately so that the visa application can be amended. Failure to do so may cause the traveler to be denied entry into the country upon arrival.

- F. Travelers will provide the FSC with information on any in-transit stops anticipated while on official travel to a foreign location, no matter how short their duration. A transit-visa is required by most countries for aircraft changes between airports no matter how long the stay/lay-over.
- G. Foreign embassies determine visa processing times and only allow expedited/walkthrough processing under extreme emergencies. Therefore, expedited memorandums are only accepted at the discretion of the embassy.
- H. Employees will ensure appropriate visa applications are completed and signed as indicated (some visa applications require multiple signatures). Wet ink signatures are required for each visa application. Employees will include two (2) current passport photos following the DoS Photo Requirements website, processing fees when applicable, or supporting documentation required by the foreign embassy. FSC will notify the traveler if the foreign embassy has specific additional photo requirements other than those for passport photos.
- I. Visas are issued by the embassy of the destination country and are processed as expeditiously as possible; priority is given based on the estimated date of travel. Unforeseen circumstances such as an embassy's national holidays, work schedules, home government approval, etc., may delay processing. Applicants should plan accordingly.
- J. Invitational orders are required by some embassies when visiting certain countries and will be provided by the inviting organization. This invitation request could be for an employee and extended to spouse and or dependents clearly outlining their participation and involvement in the conference, meeting, or workshop and how the official travel supports the U.S.'s mission. The invitation should also validate that the travel request is based on official Government business.
- K. The Embassy of China requires a \$140.00 processing fee for all visas for official and diplomatic travel. The expense is paid by the traveler in the form of a money order or travelers check only and should be made payable to the Embassy of China.
- L. Foreign embassies will not issue a visa in Government passports without a letter from SIA.
- M. A Government passport is required to be presented to obtain a visa as:
- A Diplomatic or Official visa cannot be stamped into a tourist Passport (some visas may be electronic and not stamped in the Government passport); and
  - A visa will not be granted for entry into a foreign country when the reason for travel to that country is stated as "official business" and the tourist passport is presented.

### 060508 Lost or Stolen Government Passports

- A. Travelers are responsible for safeguarding Government passports while in their possession. Refer to Appendix D, Department of State Tips for Foreign Travel.
- B. DoS and VA regards the loss of a Government passport as a serious matter as lost and stolen Government passports are often used for fraudulent purposes.
- C. If the traveler's Government passport is lost or stolen while in the U.S. before or immediately after travel, the traveler is required to notify FSC immediately via email at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov), then complete Form DS-64, Statement Regarding a Lost or Stolen Passport, and submit it to FSC for processing. Upon completion of Form DS-64, the traveler may apply for a replacement Government passport.
- D. If the traveler's Government passport is lost or stolen while in a foreign country, travelers are required to notify the nearest American Embassy or Consulate and FSC. Refer to Appendix D, Department of State Tips for Foreign Travel for POC information on reporting a lost or stolen Government passport.
- E. Stolen Government passports should be reported to the local police authority where the theft occurred.
- F. If, after reporting a Government passport as lost or stolen, the Government passport is found, the traveler should not attempt to use it.
- G. Should a traveler locate a Government passport previously reported as lost or stolen, they are required to immediately submit it to the FSC. FSC will return it to SIA for disposal.
- H. Filing Form DS-64 invalidates the Government passport; therefore, it cannot be used for travel. The information provided on the Form DS-64 is placed into the DoS Consular Lost or Stolen Passport System.
- I. Anyone using a Government passport reported as lost or stolen via Form DS-64 may be detained when presenting the Government passport to Customs or Immigration personnel.
- J. If an employee needs to obtain a replacement Government passport, he/she is required to complete Form DS-11, Passport Application, present acceptable identification, evidence of citizenship, and two new photographs. Also, the applicant is required to submit a completed DS-64, Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport, detailing what happened to the previous Government passport. Brief notations such as "lost", "stolen", or "burned" are not sufficient. The employee is required to answer each question in as much detail as possible.

### **060509 Teleworking in a Foreign County**

- A. For a traveler to perform official duties overseas under an approved telework agreement, the traveler is required to first meet the DoS Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) clearance requirements.
- B. DETO arrangements for less than one year require Chief of Mission (COM) approval through the Country Clearance Process. The COM is usually the U.S. Ambassador or U.S. embassy employee designated to perform this function. An approved VA Form 0900 is required to be submitted three months in advance of the desired start date of the arrangement, with an approved telework agreement attached.
- C. DETO arrangements for one year or more require more in-depth DoS sponsorship authorization. An approved VA Form 0900 will be submitted three (3) to six (6) months in advance of the desired start date of the arrangement, with an approved telework agreement attached, to allow the FSC sufficient time to facilitate processing of the DETO request in the National Security Decision Directive 38 (NSDD 38). The NSDD 38 dictates the required telework related document to be provided by Human Resources Administration, which FSC forwards to DoS for further routing to the COM. Telework requirements vary depending upon the country of travel.
- D. Contact FSC for information and assistance on DETO clearance requirements at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov), or 202-461-5080.

### **060510 National Security Requirements of Executive Officials**

- A. Under White House Memorandum, dated March 27, 1989, foreign travel proposals/requests by executive branch officials at or above the rank of Assistant Secretaries (or their equivalent) are to be submitted to the National Security Staff of the White House (NSS/WH) for approval.
- B. The Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP) will coordinate all notification requests on behalf of the VA executive employees.
- C. NSS/WH is required to be notified of intended travel at least seven (7) business days before the departure date. Therefore, VA travelers are required to submit a foreign travel proposal/request via email to OSP at [vanat@va.gov](mailto:vanat@va.gov) at least 14 business days before the requested foreign travel departure date. The following information is to be submitted via email:
  - Objective(s) of the trip;
  - Name(s) of the senior participants;
  - List of major events;
  - Itinerary; and
  - Meetings and appearances.

Once approved, NSS/WH will transmit a copy of the approval to OSP, and OSP will notify the traveler of the approval.

D. Upon completion of the travel, the VA executive employee is required to submit a Post Travel report to OSP in memorandum format including the following information:

- Name of senior official traveler and title;
- Beginning and ending dates of travel;
- City and country location of travel; and
- Provide details on any unusual incidents, including incidents of potential security concerns encountered during travel, or state no unusual incidents occurred if applicable.

The Post Travel report is to be sent via email to OSP at [vanat@va.gov](mailto:vanat@va.gov) within seven business days after completion of the trip.

## 0606 Authorities and References

[5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#)

[22 C.F.R. PART 51, Passports](#)

[22 C.F.R. §51.60, Denial and Restriction of Passports](#)

[28 U.S.C. 2679, Exclusiveness of remedy](#)

[38 U.S.C. 7316, Malpractice and negligence suits: defense by United States](#)

[41 C.F.R, Chapters 300 – 304](#)

[Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) website

[Form DS-82: Application for Passport by Mail](#) website

[DoS Official and Diplomatic Visa Information](#) website

[DoS Photo Requirements](#) website

[DoS Travel Advisories](#) website

[Foreign Travel Portal](#) website

[National Security Decision Directive 38](#)

Office of Director of National Intelligence, [Security Executive Agent 3](#)

[Social Security Act § 452\(k\)](#)

[State Child Support Agency Passport Denial Program Contacts](#)

[Smart Travelers Enrollment Program](#) website

[VA Form 0893, Advance Review of Offer to Donate Support for Official Travel](#)

[VA Form 0900, Foreign Travel Country Clearance Application](#)

[VA Handbook 5011, Part II, Chapter 4](#)

VA Financial Policy, [Volume XIV Travel](#)

VA Financial Policy, [Volume XIV Charge Card Programs](#)

#### **0607 Rescissions**

VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Travel, Chapter 6, International Travel, June 2019.

#### **0608 Questions**

Questions concerning these financial policies should be directed via email to:

VHA  
VBA  
NCA  
OIT  
FSC

[VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov](mailto:VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov)  
[TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov)  
[NCABudgetService@va.gov](mailto:NCABudgetService@va.gov)  
[VACOITTravel@va.gov](mailto:VACOITTravel@va.gov)  
[InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov)

**Appendix A: Revision History**

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
060201 A	Added requirement upon approval within the organizational chain, foreign travel requests must be forwarded to the Director, VA Financial Services Center for final approval.	OFP (047G)		June 2019
060403	Added Director, VA Financial Services Center role and responsibility for final approval of all foreign travel requests when in compliance with the FTR and VA policy.	OFP (047G)		June 2019
0607	Rescinded August 2015 Vol XIV Ch. 6, International Travel.	OFP (047G)		June 2019
Appendix A	Updated Delegation of Authority verbiage to reflect that VACO foreign travel approval is required by the Assistant Secretaries or Other Key Officials. Also, BVA approval is required from the Chairman, BVA. Removed the first asterisk and unnecessary corresponding sentence.	OFP (047G)		June 2019

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Overall	Updated Department of State to DoS and Travel Passport Office to FSC International Travel Team. Grammar and punctuation correction throughout the chapter.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015
060202.03	Removed an out of date requirement for VA processing of tourist passports.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015
060204B	Added the requirements for teleworking in a foreign country.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015
060404	Added CTCCS International Travel Team under Roles and Responsibilities.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015
0608	Updated CTCCS International Travel Team email.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015
Appendix C	Updated Mailing time and the use of Traceable mailing.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015
Appendix D	Updated a name change for International Travel Team.	OFP (047GA)		August 2015

**Appendix B: Designation of Approval for Foreign Travel**

Authority Designated*	SECVA	Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials	Staff Office Employees	VHA Employees	VBA/NCA Employees
Approval of Foreign Travel.	VA CFO	SECVA	Assistant Secretaries or Other Key Officials		Under Secretaries or Principal Deputy Under Secretaries
Approval of Foreign Travel less than or equal to 7 days in duration (single or cumulative trip in a fiscal year) and/or cost is less than or equal to \$3,000 from all funding sources.				VHA Medical Center Directors	
Approval of Foreign Travel equal to or greater than 8 days, but less than or equal to 14 days in duration (single or cumulative trip in a fiscal year) and/or cost is greater than \$3,000 but less than or equal to \$6,000 from all funding sources.				VISN Director**	
Approval of VHA foreign travel for any staff to the Philippines Outpatient Clinic (OPC) providing oversight operational, clinical, or administrative guidance.				VISN 21 Director	
Approval of Foreign Travel equal to or greater than 14 days in duration (single or cumulative trip in a fiscal year) and/or cost is greater than \$6,000 from all funding sources.				Under Secretary or Deputy Under Secretary **	
Travel to countries listed on the Department of State's dangerous country list or if there are significant legal issues involved, as documented by the Ethics Specialty Team, Office of General Counsel.				Under Secretary or Deputy Under Secretary **	
Funds are donated by a foreign government entity.				Under Secretary or Deputy Under Secretary **	

\*Approval authority cannot be re-designated.

\*\*For VHA, each approval level requires approval from a previous level as specified in Appendix C, Veterans Health Administration Approval.

### Appendix C: Veterans Health Administration Approval

The information included in this appendix applies ONLY to VHA employee TDY foreign area travel approval requests. General guidance on VHA specific foreign area travel policy requirements are provided, including Level I, II, and III review criteria and the position required to approve the VA Form 0900, Foreign Travel Country Clearance Application at each Level.

- A. Review and approval levels (reference table below) required for foreign area travel are determined through a multi-level process, as the potential for risk, cost, or legal issues arise. The approval level is determined by the position of the individual traveling; the danger of the country; the travel funding source; the total number of days requested in a fiscal year; the total cost of a single travel request; and any legal issues associated with the travel.
- B. Advance approval of foreign area travel is required. Retroactive approval will not be granted. Travelers will not engage in foreign travel without prior approval and may be subject to administrative actions if they do.
- C. Requests for foreign area travel exceeding 30 days in a single trip will be considered an Extended Educational Leave trip and are required to be processed under both the Extended Educational Leave and the Foreign Travel Portal approval processes.
- D. Medical Care appropriations will not be used to fund foreign travel for trainees; Without Compensation (WOC) appointees; or less than 3/8 part-time physicians.
- E. Funds are not earmarked specifically for foreign travel. Approval of funds for foreign travel are required to be based on the availability of local (facility, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), or program office) appropriated travel funds.
- F. Foreign travel approval to attend a conference to participate as a speaker or in another official role is required to be documented by an invitation/request to do so. Foreign travel approval to attend a conference, without formal participation of the traveler on the agenda, is contingent on the foreign travel Approving Official's evaluation of the specific circumstances for attending.
- G. Foreign travel will not be approved for routine purposes or to accommodate personal interests. Employees will understand the following:
  - Annual leave in conjunction with official travel is scrutinized;
  - Annual leave will not be approved if the number of annual leave days exceeds the number of official duty travel days;
  - All requests for annual leave are required to be approved before commencing travel;
  - Requests to use annual leave after commencing travel will be disapproved for this period of travel; and

- Emergencies arising while on foreign travel requiring leave are handled locally on a case-by-case basis and are required to be coordinated through FSC.

H. All VHA foreign travel approval requests are subject to a review of specific criteria and approval at various levels based on the travel episode. A Level I review is required to meet the criteria established for Level I approval. Once Level I approval is obtained, if the travel episode involves one or more Level II criteria, it will require a Level II review and approval. Once Level II approval is obtained, if the travel episode involves one or more Level III criteria, it will require a Level III review and approval. Should a foreign travel request require approval at a higher level, each level's approver is required to document their level review has been approved before forwarding up to the next level for approval. If travel is disapproved, it does not move on to the next level for approval.

A supervisor or service chief approval signature is required to initially submit the VA Form 0900 to FSC and to begin the approval review process. To approve, the required approval review level is required to determine the foreign travel is in the best interest of VHA and by extension VA. VHA has established three levels of review and approval for travel to a foreign area as follows:

Level	VAMC Staff	VISN Staff	VACO Staff
Level I	Medical Center Director	Network Director	Executive Leader of a Program Office (i.e. Chief Officer)
Level II	Network Director, or VISN 21 Director if travel is to the Philippines Outpatient Clinic (OPC)	Executive Leader of 10N/Field Operations, or VISN 21 Director if travel is to Philippines OPC	Executive Leader reporting to the USH (i.e. Assistant Under Secretary for Health), or VISN 21 Director if travel is to Philippines OPC.
Level III	Under Secretary for Health (USH) or Deputy Under Secretary for Health (DUSH)	USH or DUSH	USH or DUSH

Level I, II, and III approvers may require additional approvals, documents, or consultations not specified below, as required by your department. Consult with your supervisor or service chief regarding these additional requirements before submitting an approval request for review.

1. Level I Review/Approval criteria are listed below. If the travel involves a Level II criterion, the Level I approval is required to be determined and granted before

moving forward for Level II review for approval.

- a. Verify the VHA employee has provided their VA Form 0900, signed by their supervisor or service chief, and all other required approvals, documents, and consultations have been provided.
  - b. Determine whether the travel is of benefit to the VA.
  - c. If a gift or donation is involved, ensure VA Form 0893, Advance Review of Offer to Donate Support for Official Travel has been completed by the traveler and reviewed and approved by the Ethics Specialty Team, Office of General Counsel for the acceptance of the gift(s) (Funding Source Criteria). Approval reviews are required to ensure travel to foreign countries is a fiscally responsible decision and avoids conflicts of interest generated by the acceptance of gifts, i.e. when funding originates from a non-VA source, including gifts from foreign governments.
  - d. Verify the traveler is eligible for foreign travel.
  - e. Ensure the following appropriate reviews and approvals have taken place or conditions have been met, and the resulting responses, comments, or documentation are provided for review:
    - The local Education Committee or the Research and Development Committee review and approval is completed;
    - If VA-appropriated research funds are being used, the mandatory review and approval by VHA Office of Research and Development is completed;
    - The request to obtain a Government passport is in progress and was submitted in advance of travel;
    - The travel involves a scientific meeting, educational experience, or other appropriate opportunities not reasonably available in the U.S.;
    - The traveler has either been invited by a credible and well-known national or international organization, or attendance is based on specific circumstances justifying attendance;
    - If more than one person is applying for travel to the same meeting, a determination is required to be made that multiple travelers are warranted; and
    - The balance between official time and personal time is determined to be reasonable and appropriate.
  - f. Level I approval is required for less than or equal to seven (7) days in duration (single or cumulative trip in a fiscal year) and/or cost is less than or equal to \$3,000 from all funding sources.
2. Level II Review/Approval criteria are listed below. If the travel episode involves a Level III criterion, the Level II approval is required to be determined and granted

before moving forward for Level III review for approval.

- a. Number of days and cost: Level II approval is required for travel equal to or greater than 8-days, but less than 14 days in duration (single or cumulative trip in a fiscal year) and/or cost is greater than \$3,000 but less than or equal to \$6,000 from all funding sources.
- b. The Level II review and approval of foreign travel requests for any VA staff to the Philippines OPC is designated to the VISN 21 Network Director only. The approval authority is limited to authorizing VA staff that may provide oversight operational, clinical, or administrative guidance to the clinic. Travel to the OPC is the only VA medical care facility located in a foreign country and is an integral part of the U.S. mission to the Republic of the Philippines. As a result of its mission, travel to the Philippines is required for oversight and conduct of clinical and administrative operations. Travel to the OPC for site visits are considered part of conducting responsible and routine business.

Travel requests to Manila or the Philippines not involving specific VHA work at the Philippines OPC will follow all requirements of Foreign Travel Requests, review and approval, and is not designated to the VISN 21 Network Director but will require Medical Center Director or Network Director approval accordingly.

Medical Center Directors, Network Directors, and VISN 21 Network Director approvers are responsible for notifying travelers that at no time while on VA-supported foreign travel shall a VA patient care provider assume responsibility for the clinical care of a non-VA patient, except those non-Veteran patients at the Philippines OPC, or for providing humanitarian care under emergency circumstances. This prohibition applies to periods of all VA supported travel. While on foreign travel, an employee generally is not protected by 38 U.S.C. 7316, Malpractice and negligence suits: defense by United States or the 28 U.S.C. 2679, Exclusiveness of remedy (commonly referred to as the Westfall Act) for personal liability (malpractice) in the care of non-VA patients.

3. Level III Review/Approval will only be requested once both a Level I and II approval has been obtained. The USH or DUSH will review the following travel episode criterion and will determine if approval is warranted.
  - a. The duration of travel is equal to or greater than 15-days in duration (single or cumulative trip in a fiscal year).
  - b. The cost of the travel exceeds \$6,000 from all funding sources.
  - c. Travel funds are paid or donated by a foreign government.

- d. The foreign travel involves travel to a dangerous country designated by DoS.
  - e. Travel involves significant legal issues as documented by the Ethics Specialty Team, Office of General Counsel.
4. Once the required approval signatures have been obtained the traveler will send the VA Form 0900 via email to the FSC at [InternationalTravelService@va.gov](mailto:InternationalTravelService@va.gov).

## Appendix D: Department of State Tips for Foreign Travel

For detailed information about steps you can take to ensure a safe trip, refer to DoS Travel Advisories website. Here are some quick tips to make your travel easier and safer:

- A. Sign up for the Smart Travelers Enrollment Program which allows DoS to better assist you in an emergency. Let DoS know your travel plans through the Smart Travelers Enrollment Program, a free online service. This will help DoS contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. Under the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.
- B. Make sure you have a signed valid passport, and a visa if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport before commencing travel.
- C. Leave copies of your itinerary, Government passport data page, and visas with family or friends so you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Take a copy of these documents with you when you travel, keeping them separate from your actual Government passport in case your passport is lost or stolen.
- D. Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws. While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The DoS website has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.
- E. To avoid being a target of crime, do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of cash. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.
- F. Carelessness is the main cause of losing a passport or having it stolen. You may find that you have to carry your Government passport with you because you need to show it when you cash traveler's checks or the country that you are visiting requires you to carry it as an identity document. When you carry your Government passport, hide it securely. Do not leave it in a handbag or an exposed pocket. Whenever possible, leave your Government passport in the hotel safe, not in an empty hotel room, and not packed in your luggage. One family member should not carry all the Government passports for the entire family.
- G. In case of an emergency or your Government passport is lost or stolen, personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates in foreign areas and the U.S., are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to assist U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Website. The Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747 if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444 if calling from overseas.