

# FAQ: OVERSEAS TOUR LENGTH CHANGE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND IRAQ

(AS OF JUNE 2, 2020)

***The Department of Defense has changed the current overseas tour length for Department of Defense military personnel assigned to permanent duty locations in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq by establishing a 12-month unaccompanied tour.***

## **Q1. What is the scope of this tour change?**

A1. The tour length change applies to DOD military personnel under Title 10 authority on permanent duty assignment to: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Iraq. However only Bahrain and Qatar are affected by this change, and families in the two countries are authorized to serve out the remainder of their tours.

## **Q2. What is the timeline for this tour change?**

A2. Over the next two years, DOD military personnel who fall under Title 10 authority will transition to one-year unaccompanied tours, with some exceptions.

- This will be a gradual drawdown of dependents over two years as people regularly rotate in and attrite out of duty assignment in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.
- This will be fully implemented by August 31, 2022, per prescribed policy and at the conclusion of current accompanied tours.

## **Q3. How does COVID-19 and the DOD “Stop Movement” affect this decision?**

A3. The current travel restrictions have affected the movement of some military personnel with orders for Permanent Change of Station (PCS), however the services have the flexibility to move personnel using waivers for mission and personal reasons. Military personnel with PCS orders to move to an accompanied tour in the countries affected by this tour length change will PCS at the conclusion of the travel restrictions, and complete their 2-year accompanied tour by August 31, 2022.

## **Q4. What is the rationale behind this decision?**

A4. This step is a byproduct of the Department’s continuous reassessment of personnel policies worldwide, not just in the Middle East. It is intended to ensure the operational readiness and deployment flexibility of U.S. forces’ mission support to operations in the region. A gradual drawdown of personnel will ensure mission-critical elements of the force continue to execute training and operations in the region with little disruption.

Note: This tour length change is no way connected to the status of COVID-19 in the region or in the United States.

**Q5. Who does the tour change apply to?**

A5. DOD military personnel under Combatant Command (Title 10) authority and on permanent duty assignment to Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq will now serve unaccompanied. To ensure continuity of mission and to meet readiness requirements, military currently assigned to an accompanied tour or who currently have orders to prepare to move up to 30 days after the approval, will be allowed remain on an accompanied tour and PCS to their next accompanied tour, but either must be completed no later than August 31, 2022.

Military personnel who are issued orders after the effective date of this decision will be assigned in unaccompanied status on a tour length of 12 months; 18 months for Bahrain.

**Q6. Are there any DOD dependents in Arabian Peninsula locations who do not fall under CENTCOM authority, and would therefore remain?**

A6. Yes. This tour change does not apply to military personnel and their dependents that fall under Chief of Mission (Title 22) authority, many of whom are assigned to U.S. Embassies. The tour change only applies to Department of Defense military personnel under Combatant Command (Title 10) authority.

**Q7. Are there any alternatives to this tour change?**

A7. There are alternatives to the 12-month unaccompanied tour change. Navy Service members assigned to Bahrain will be authorized an 18-month unaccompanied tour for two years from the date of tour change approval, subject to renewal. There will also be allowance for a limited number of designated key and essential positions. If already authorized for a given location, civilian employees will continue to serve an accompanied tour as part of a service agreement.

**Q8. How many DOD dependents will now depart?**

A8. Departures from locations on the Arabian Peninsula will occur through normal assignment attrition as accompanied tours end over the two-year period prescribed. No personnel or dependents will currently depart the region as a result of this decision.

**Q9. Will the current tours of DOD military personnel assigned to the designated locations be truncated?**

A9. No. The tour lengths that were agreed upon before assignment will remain in effect; they will not be cut short by the tour change, so long as the current accompanied tour is completed by August 31, 2022.

**Q10. Will dependents be able to return to the Arabian Peninsula in the future?**

A10. The majority of DOD personnel who are assigned to the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq under the authority of the CENTCOM Commander will now transition to unaccompanied tours. Families should anticipate that this tour change will be permanent.

**Q11. When and how did you notify family members?**

A11. In advance of the tour length change being signed into effect this week, each military service and command in country to which the military personnel are assigned has communicated the decision to their force and to the family community. In addition to these online resources, the command leadership will be families' number one resource for information on the recent tour length change.

**Q12. What resources are you making available to dependents to assist with PCS relocation?**

A12. U.S. military personnel and their families currently assigned to the designated countries will not require relocation services at this time. As part of the Services' Relocation Assistance Program, support and resources are always available for families and individuals as part of the PCS move. Relocation assistance crosses many topics including financial readiness, special needs, child care, spouse employment, education and family advocacy. MilitaryOneSource.mil and the U.S. Transportation Command's Move.mil are also both excellent resources.