



SOUTH OF THE ALPS



Issue 6

FINANCE NEWSLETTER

Mar 2002

Bravo Detachment, 208th FB, Vicenza, Italy

TASK FORCE SANTE FE:
 We would like to extend our warmest welcome to the soldiers of TF Sante Fe. Here in Vicenza and other locations through-out SETAF, to include Camp Darby, Italy, the soldiers of Task Force Sante Fe have arrived. Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry, 66th Brigade, 35th Infantry Division are here to help give USAREUR/SETAF soldiers some much needed relief from the long hours of security duties being pulled since September 11th. This group of Illinois based reserve soldiers play a vital role in providing force protection support and their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Bravo Detachment, 208th Finance Battalion will be providing finance support to these soldiers. For any pay issues or concerns, here are your Points of Contact:

Vicenza, Italy:

SGT Moore (Primary) 634-8852
william.moore@setaf.army.mil

SFC Mallory (alternate) 634-7044

Camp Darby, Italy:

SFC Fowler 633-7516

charles.fowler@darby.setaf.army.mil



PROUDLY SERVING OUR MILITARY COMMUNITIES

- ITALY: US EMBASSY, ROME
- POGGIO RENATICO
- VERONA/AVIANO
- NAPLES
- CAMP DARBY
- SPAIN: MADRID
- GREECE: US EMBASSY, ATHENS
- LARISSA
- TURKEY: ANKARA
- IZMIR
- INCIRLIK
- PORTUGAL: LISBON

COLA FOR VICENZA?: it's true--those soldiers stationed at Vicenza, Italy will begin to see **Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)** in their pay very soon. The change became effective 16 Feb, 2002.

Based on data from last year's COLA survey, all locations in Italy either stayed the same or increased. Vicenza had one of the largest increases (8 points), and since Vicenza has not been receiving COLA for some time, the start-up/increase should be particularly nice.

COLA is based upon pay grade, number of family members, and current rate of exchange. Each designated site has a location code. The Vicenza code is IT073. To check your COLA estimate go to: <http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/rateinfo.html>.

Inside This Issue

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Bravo Blaze, Keep the fire burning!!!

Travel News

➤ **POV MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT:** Effective January 21, 2002 the mileage reimbursement for official TDY travel increased from 34.5 cents per mile to 36.5 cents per mile. Remember, if your TDY orders authorize you to use your POV for official travel, you can not claim fuel expenses--these are included in your mileage reimbursement.

➤ **PAYMENT HINTS FOR GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CARD HOLDERS:** Protect your government travel card privileges. If you neglect to pay your travel card VISA in a timely manner, the Bank of America is making collections directly from your military pay for seriously delinquent accounts. Don't let this happen to you.

Until an electronic solution is in place and for cardholders whose agency/organization does not offer split disbursement, cardholders should be advised to follow these simple steps for the most expedient posting of their payment via the U.S. mail:

- Write the full 16 digit government charge card number on the check or money order.
- Do NOT send cash
- Mail the payment and the remit coupon from the monthly statement in the envelope provided.
- Do not staple, tape, paper clip or otherwise fasten the payment to the remit coupon.
- Mail the payment in time for it to reach the Bank of America by the payment due date. This ensures the will be received in the mail and posted by the next statement date cycle.

PAY BY PHONE: When time and convenience is of the essence, cardholders may also elect to use the Bank of America Pay by Phone Service for a \$10 fee. This option is available by calling customer service at 1-800-472-1424. Payments made using the Pay by Phone Service will be posted within 24-48 hours.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Bank of America receives approximately 17,000 statements returned in the mail due to *no forwarding orders or the recipient is no longer at the address on file*. Make sure you keep your address current with BOA.

USEFUL TRAVEL WEBSITES

JFTR/JTR TRAVEL REGS	www.dtic.mil/perdiem/pdrates.html
E/MSS SITE	https://emss.dfas.mil/emss.htm
TRAVEL PAYMENT STATUS SITE	https://portal.ssg.gunter.af.mil/tpq2/SSNquery.cfm
PER DIEM RATES	www.dtic.mil/perdiem/pdrates.html
DTOD—OFFICIAL DISTANCES	http://128.190.151.4/
SATO ON-LINE	www.satotravel.com/usareur
GOV TRAVEL CARD WEBSITE	http://www.dfas.mil/money/travel/

➤ **TIPS FOR TDY TRAVELERS :** When claiming reimbursement for **FUEL COUPONS**, make sure that you claim **ONLY** the coupons you **ACTUALLY** use. A claim that appears to be excessive, causing suspicion, may be investigated for fraud under JFTR U2505. Don't abuse fuel claims.



CAREER STATUS BONUS AND REDUX: If you have reached your cutoff date 15 year time frame, there is a mandatory briefing that you must attend regardless of your choice of options.

The CSB/REDUX briefing is always scheduled on the last working MONDAY within the month.

If you need immediate information go to www.odcsper.army.mil and look for the CSB/REDUX information.

If you are at a remote location and are unable to attend the briefing, it is imperative that you contact the Vicenza Transition Center. Your POC is Mr. Peter Luste at 634-8478.

RETIREMENTS OR SEPARATIONS: For normal retirements, ETS, or Chapter separations your SETAF point of contact is Ms Heyer. Her office is located at Vicenza, Italy and she may be reached at DSN 634-8855.



CALENDAR

- **Payday** 1
- **Midmo Cutoff** 5
- **Midmo NPA distro** 11
- **Midmonth Payday** 15
- **USAREUR Tng Hol** 18
- **EOM cutoff** 18
- **LES Distro** 25



*FISCAL YEAR 2002
MILITARY PAYDAYS*

MAR 2002-----01	APR
APR 2002-----01	MAY
MAY 2002-----31	MAY
JUN 2002-----01	JUL
JUL 2002-----01	AUG
AUG 2002-----30	AUG
SEP 2002-----01	OCT



Late Breaking News

Military Report.com
www.militaryreport.com

- FEB 11, ISSUE
- 2003 Payroll projection made
 - Soldiers must choose retirement option by Mar 1
 - Low interest rates for service members

- FEB 4, ISSUE
- Bill would close Salary Gap for Federal Reservists.
 - VA home loan eligibility tool available.



www.defenselink.mil/news

DEFENSE LINK:
The defense link web site contains a wealth of information on both Military News as well as a broad spectrum of finance news and information.

Military Pay News

➤ **COLA, OHA, AND THE RATE OF EXCHANGE:** Ever wonder why your military pay seems to be different every payday? The culprit is the “Rate of Exchange”. Whenever the dollar is strong and you can buy more EURO, your allowances are lower. If the dollar weakens and you get less EURO for your dollar, then your allowances are increased.

The two items on your LES that are affected when the exchange rate fluctuates are **Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA)** and **Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA)**. OHA is paid to service members who live in private housing at an overseas duty station and pay rent. COLA is paid when goods and services purchased on the local economy overseas are more expensive than if they were purchased in the U.S.A.

Information and current rates for Overseas Cost of Living Allowances and Overseas Housing Allowances are available at the Per Diem Committee’s website at www.dtic.mil/perdiem. Rates are updated every two weeks. You can also contact the Italy Overseas Allowances Coordinator at DSN 626-5666.

➤ **EMPLOYEE/MEMBER SELF SERVICE (E/MSS) FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS:** E/MSS is an innovative, automated system that puts soldiers in control of processing certain pay data on-line via the internet without submitting forms to finance. You may access E/MSS at: <http://emss.dfas.mil/emss.HTM> If you are not currently enrolled, see your servicing finance office for enrollment procedures.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME:

- TSP: Start/Stop/Change
- LES: View/Print/Change delivery method
- Change Federal tax withholdings
- Change direct deposit

FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS:

- ➔ **State Tax and Savings Bonds - July 2002**
- ➔ **Allotments - Oct 2002**
- ➔ **W2s/W2C - Jan 2003**

➤ **TIMELINESS--MILITARY PAY DOCUMENTS:** It is VITAL that military pay documents are submitted to finance in a timely manner. Late pay documents DIRECTLY impact soldiers pay and may create an avoidable financial hardship to the soldier and his/her family. Here in SETAF, we do a pretty good job at submitting pay documents on time but there is much room for improvement. The most important pay documents and the ones that directly impact soldiers net pay are: BAS, COLA, BAH, & OHA. Upon approval/authorization, please submit these to finance immediately. Let’s not penalize the soldier and his family for avoidable delays.

ON THE WEB



DFAS	http://www.dfas.mil/
266 th FINCOM	https://www.266fc.hqusareur.army.mil
THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP)	http://www.tsp.gov
BAH RATES	http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/bah.html
OHA & COLA SEARCH	http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/rateinfo.html
E/MSS LES ON-LINE	https://emss.dfas.mil/emss.htm
FINANCE REGULATIONS	http://131.84.1.34/comptroller/fmr/

Employee/Member Self Service (E/MSS)

How to get a (Personal Identification Number) PIN to access the E/MSS

_____ Date

Put a copy of your military ID card here:
picture side only.

Dear Customer Service:

Please establish a temporary PIN for the E/MSS so that I can access my account information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Signature Required

(please print) Rank First Middle Initial Last Name

_____ Social Security Number

_____ Home Phone Number

FAX TO DSN: 312-580-5800 or Civilian: 216-522-5800

YOU MUST INCLUDE A PHOTOCOPY OF THE FRONT OF YOUR MILITARY ID CARD WITH THIS FAX.

Your new Temporary PIN will be set to the last five numbers of your SSN. Please wait **at least** two business days before attempting to use your new PIN (allow additional time if you mailed your request). **You will not receive any notification that your temporary PIN has been reset.** You can try the new temporary PIN at least two business days after faxing your request. Allow more time before trying your new temporary PIN if you mailed your request.

<https://emss.dfas.mil> or 1-877-363-3677 or 478-757-3119

For more information visit the web site shown above or call 1-800-390-2348.

MONEY MATTERS

- **THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP):** If you have not received your TSP Personal Identification Number (PIN), be patient. The Thrift Investment Board is currently in the process of sending out introductory letters and PIN numbers to those soldiers who recently established new accounts. Upon receipt, you will be able to access the TSP Web site or call the Thrift-Line at 504-255-8777 to make contribution allocation. For more information you can visit the TSP website at WWW.TSP.GOV
- **FINANCIAL READINESS HANDBOOK:** Recently, a financial readiness handbook was added to the 266th FINCOM website at <https://www.266fc.hqusareur.army.mil> This handbook includes topics regarding overseas entitlements, **investment options**, time-value of money and preparing financially for deployments. This handbook was also designed for briefing purposes and can be downloaded to present to an array of audiences. Your POC is CPT Ryan, 266th FINCOM, Finance and Accounting Policy Division, 379-5175.
- **LOW INTEREST RATES GOOD FOR SOLDIERS:** Interest rates for mortgage loans remain at a low not seen in decades. If you are a service member or veteran thinking about purchasing a home, or you are interested in refinancing your current mortgage at a lower interest rate, you can find valuable information online at Military.com. In addition to providing free information on VA loans and conventional loans, Military.com has a short online form service members can fill out to receive more information. The service is free, and the form can be accessed online. You can also check your VA Loan eligibility, get your eligibility certificate, compare VA and conventional loans, see how much you can afford, and also get some tips for smart home buying. That web site is: http://www.military.com/Finance/Content?ESRC=mr.nl&file=apply_for_loan.htm&area=Content
- **Use Asset Allocation for maximum financial gain whether the market is up or down !** Check out the 266th FINCOM's Financial Readiness Improvement Program at <https://www.266fc.hqusareur.army.mil> to learn more about **Asset Allocation**.

➤ **INCOME TAX--DEADLINE TO FILE:** Tax Season is upon us once again. If you are stationed in Europe, you have an automatic extension to file your federal income taxes. The normal April 15th deadline does not apply and you have an additional two months to file your taxes by **June 15th**. For more information, please contact your local legal office. If you are deployed to the Balkans, you may have an additional 180 days AFTER you return to file your taxes.



I BONDS = 4.40%

Buy Bonds

www.savingsbonds.gov



EE BONDS = 4.07%

New rates will be posted on May 1, 2002

Soldiers on the Move

Just PCS'd to Europe?

If your duty assignment location is anywhere *South of the Alps* to include Italy, Turkey, Greece, Spain, or Portugal, B Det, 208th FB will be responsible for your military pay, travel, and finance issues. We consider it a privilege to be able to provide finance support to you.

TEMPORARY LODGING ALLOWANCE (TLA)

- TLA is authorized to partially reimburse a soldier for the above normal expenses incurred during the occupancy of temporary lodging. In addition, the expense of meals obtained as a direct result of temporary lodging outside of CONUS which does not have facilities for preparing meals.
- TLA is payable upon initial arrival (reporting) at a new permanent duty station (PDS). The new PDS must be located outside of CONUS and the soldier must be pending assignment of government quarters or other permanent living arrangements such as economy housing.
- TLA is NOT payable when a soldier is on leave or TDY.
- TLA payments will be paid in the service members normal pay and will appear on the Leave and Earning Statement (LES).
- Rates are based on the soldier and his number of authorized family members.
- TLA Claims must be filed through the local housing office in 10 day increments.

Deploying Soon?

Your tour in Europe could very possibly include a rotation to one of several deployment locations to include Bosnia, Hungary, Croatia, Macedonia, or Kosovo. In the event you are required to deploy to one of these locations referred to as “down range” it is very important that you understand your pay entitlements. This months featured deployment entitlement is:

HARDSHIP DUTY PAY- LOCATION

Hardship Duty Pay (HDP-L) – (formerly Certain Places Pay, formerly Foreign Duty Pay)

- Payable to soldiers within designated areas:
 - Enlisted soldiers are “grandfather” and continue receiving \$8.00-22.50 per month while in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Kosovo.
 - All soldiers assigned in Hungary receive \$50.00 per month except for Budapest, which is not a designated area. Soldiers in Sofia, Bulgaria receive \$100 per month and other Bulgarian areas get \$50 per month.
- Starts on day arrived in HDP-L area in permanently assigned. Stops on day departing designated area for reassignment.

The 266th FINCOM has an excellent web site that will provide you information on deployment topics

www.266fc.hqsareur.army.mil

PCSing back to the States?

You have successfully completed your European tour and now it is time to PCS back to the United States. Some of the entitlements that you have become accustomed to receiving will no longer be paid upon your return to CONUS. This months featured PCS entitlement is:

BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING (BAH)

- **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH):** Once you terminate your government quarters or your economy quarters, you will be authorized BAH II at the table rate. Upon your arrival at your new duty station, your BAH will be re-certified based on the zip code of your new duty location. For current rate:

<http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/bah.html>

• OVERVIEW

January 1, marked another year of the housing allowance called Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). BAH is based on geographic duty location, pay grade, and dependency status. The intent of BAH is to provide uniformed service members accurate and equitable housing compensation based on housing costs in local civilian housing markets, and is payable when government quarters are not provided. Effective January 1, 2000, most pay grades, at most locations, were entitled to increased housing allowances. For more information visit this web site:

<http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/bah.html>



PRAY FOR OUR NATION



Information current as of date of publication.

Newsletter POC: This newsletter is a publication of Bravo Detachment, 208th Finance Battalion. The information contained herein is for the benefit of our military communities “South of the Alps” to include Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey. We hope that you find the information useful and informative. If you have any suggestions or comments, contact 1LT Barowski, at DSN 634-7612/7622 or email CHRISTINE.BAROWSKI@SETAF.ARMY.MIL

MPS

COMMANDER
B DET, 208TH FB
UNIT 31401, BOX 50
APO AE, 09630

Feedback Form

Please take a few minutes to provide suggestions as to how we may improve our service to you.
