

• Overseas Tours: Self-sponsored Civilians

A long-standing DOD policy has been to limit overseas employment to 5 years for most US civil service employees. Some form of this rotation policy has been around since 1966. In a March 1997 memorandum, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy re-affirmed DOD's intent that civilian appropriated fund employment overseas be limited to 5 years, in all but "extremely rare" circumstances. The memo also emphasized that any extensions should be directly tied to mission needs, are intended to provide short-term management flexibility based on local needs and conditions, and are not intended to provide for permanent employment in the foreign area.

Who is subject to rotation? Most US civilian employees are subject to this rotation requirement. Exceptions include family members of military and civilian employees, employees who worked overseas prior to the rotation requirement, DODDS educators, and a few other limited exceptions.

A common misconception about the rotation policy is that your clock starts over if you change agencies or have a break in service while overseas. This is not true. All appropriated fund US civilian employment within DOD counts toward the 5-year limitation, unless interrupted by a 12 month US residency requirement. This also applies to individuals who previously met the 5 year limitation, moved to a different pay system (i.e., nonappropriated fund or AAFES) and have reapplied for another appropriated fund (civil service) position. If the 12-month US residency requirement has not been met, the individual will not be eligible for a new overseas appropriated fund appointment. What happens to you if you are not extended? The action depends on your specific status but there are a few common situations. You may self-nominate for other positions or exercise your return rights. We try to notify your return rights base 90 days prior to the end of your tour of your intent to return. If you have return rights to a lower grade, you are eligible to register in the DOD Priority Placement Program (PPP) for your current (higher) grade. If there is no offer within 30 days prior to the end of your tour, you will be removed from the PPP and must exercise your return rights. If you have return rights to the same grade, you are not eligible to register in PPP. If you do not have return rights and are a career or career-conditional employee, you are also eligible to register in PPP; however, you may remain overseas in your current position until a valid offer is received. If you decline a valid offer, you are subject to separation from Federal Service.

• Overseas Tours – Family Members

If you were hired after you arrived overseas with your sponsor, you are not subject to rotation. Your tour corresponds to that of your sponsor. We will ask you to update your DEROS (rotation date) periodically to ensure we have the current information in our data system.

What happens when your sponsor rotates or your family member status changes? Generally, if your military or civilian sponsor PCSs, you are expected to do so also. If your sponsor retires or separates from active duty or civil service, or you divorce, you are no longer a family member and cannot remain employed under family member conditions. However, there are some exceptions. If you are a career or career-conditional employee and lose your family member status for any reason, you can remain employed; however, you become subject to the rotation policy. You may continue in the position for an additional two years or the remainder of the five-year period, whichever is later. If you were hired on a family member appointment (Schedule A, 213.3106(b)(6)), you generally cannot stay employed any longer than 60 days after your status changes. In rare instances, usually related to mission requirements, you might be authorized to remain employed for up to a maximum of 12 months; however, this exception is seldom granted.