SEPARATE MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (SMA)

General: SMA is intended to help civilian employees with additional expenses when a separate household for dependents must be maintained elsewhere.

Regulation: Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR), Section 260:
https://aoprals.state.gov/

Types of SMA:

- Convenience of the government (involuntary): when an employee is prohibited from maintaining dependents at the post of assignment (not applicable at Ramstein AB, GE)
- Convenience of the employee (voluntary): when an employee has a special need or hardship caused by compelling reasons to maintain family members elsewhere (i.e., career, educational or health reasons)
- Temporary SMA may be granted for 30-90 days if a child needs to complete the school year

Specifics:

- SMA granted only for dependents that would be authorized government transportation and would normally accompany the employee
- SMA is paid in lieu of any travel and transportation entitlements for the family members
- Separation from dependents must be for at least 90 days (involuntary and voluntary SMA), except if a child needs to complete school year
- SMA is not granted for:
  - Voluntary legal separation (i.e. with intention of filing for divorce)
  - Child's legal custody being vested wholly, or in part, in a person other than the employee, unless joint custody is established
  - Children over 18 years of age, unless they are attending secondary (high) school or are incapable of self-support (handicapped) – voluntary SMA
  - Children over 21 years of age, unless they are attending secondary (high) school or are incapable of self-support (handicapped) – involuntary SMA

Procedure:

- Request is made in writing to overseas allowances section of the Civilian Personnel Section at time of assignment, but prior to travel, to overseas area, or at the time the need for SMA arises after arrival at the overseas duty station
- Full justification and supporting documentation (i.e. if health reason is involved, a statement from the physician is required) has to be included in the request