

Let's Get Help from DAD

How to streamline and expedite the pay process for Reserve Marines on orders

by Maj Bryan A. Vaught, USMCR

One of the hallmarks of being a Marine is our ability to rapidly deploy and be ready to “fight tonight.” Although Marines may be physically ready, willing, and able to participate in upcoming exercises and deployments, the administrative process for approval is often unable to maintain pace with operational requirements. Reserve Marines must receive orders via the current orders writing process, which is an important, but tedious administrative barrier that must be overcome. Unlike active duty Marines who are already in a pay status, Reserve Marines do not receive regular pay and entitlements on the 1st and 15th of the month unless they are administratively joined to a unit for more than 30 days. Today's process for bringing a Reserve Marine into a pay status starts with the creation of orders using the Marine Resource Orders Writing Service (MROWS).

However, there is another method available to pay a Reserve Marine for work performed which is easier to schedule and navigate than MROWS. All Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) and Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Marines also have personal information residing in a system called the Requirements Transition and Manpower Management System (RTAMMS) which has a primary application called the Drill Management Module (DMM). This article will explore the possibility of eliminating several Reserve orders types from MROWS and transitioning them to the DMM in order to streamline the deployment and

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travel claim processes. I will discuss how the creation of a new pay category (that already exists elsewhere) could easily be created within RTAMMS to save the Marine and his unit countless hours of administrative burden each year, and ultimately allow the Marine to focus more on operational requirements vice administrative processes.

Current (Legacy) Process for Reserve Orders Writing

When a Marine joins an IMA or SMCR unit, they are required to perform annual training (AT) periods every year to maintain readiness and fulfill unit operational requirements. AT periods consist of twelve to thirteen days (for IMA) or fourteen to fifteen days (for SMCR) of active duty. Before receiving orders for the AT period, the Reserve Marine normally goes through a process of requesting orders through their unit's operational sponsor (for IMA) or SMCR S-1 Section. The Reserve orders process will often occur as follows:

- The Marine submits an orders request form stating the duty purpose, location, dates, travel method, government travel charge card status, and other pertinent information that helps

the orders writer(s) generate his orders.

- The Marine's IMA operational sponsor or SMCR S-1 Section drafts the orders.

- A determination is also made as to whether the Reserve Marine will require a flight to be booked through a government ticketing agency. Reserve Marines often use Alamo Travel, SATO Travel, or another commercial ticketing office (CTO) to book the flight, rental vehicle, and lodging requests.

- For certain orders types, flight and rental vehicle requests must then be submitted through the MARFORRES Training Exercise and Employment Plan Management System, more commonly known as T3.

- If everything is in order, and there are no pending administrative issues preventing travel (known as hard holds), then MROWS automatically routes the orders to fund approval. However, hard holds must be addressed and “released” by a Marine with authentication permissions. Some of the more common hard holds include issues such as: the Marine's physical health assessment being past due, a human immunodeficiency virus test being outdated (more than

two-years-old), civilian employment information not being verified, unsettled orders (from a previous claim), legal hold, medical hold, and high active duty time (over sixteen years of service).

- Next, the orders are fund approved by a member of the Marine's IMA operational group such as the Reserve liaison officer or IMA operations group manager, or they will commonly route to the SMCR unit's supply/fiscal section.

- Once the orders have been approved for funding, then they must then be authenticated (reviewed) by another Marine who has a different set of permissions. This step is often completed by the same Marine who may have released the hard hold(s) during Step 5 above.

- Only after the orders are authenticated will MARFORRES Distribution Management Office (DMO) submit payment information to the CTO office to book the flight and/or rental vehicle.

- The CTO office will ticket the flight and send the Marine's unit rep (who normally submitted the travel request) a passenger name record locator number, which can be used to view the flight and rental vehicle itinerary.

- The itinerary must then be manually forwarded to the Marine's email address to review and confirm that everything looks correct. The Marine will also need to either log on to MROWS and retrieve a copy of their orders or have their S-1/ Reserve Liaison Officer section send them the orders.

- The Marine's government travel charge card must now also be activated by the unit's agency program coordinator prior to travel, if not already in an active status.

DTS-R and MROWS Process

Since Fiscal Year 2019, MARFORRES has begun to transition from its legacy process to the Defense Travel System-Reserve (DTS-R). The DTS-R System is the very same DTS program that active duty and active Reserve Marines have used since about 2008.

However, the primary difference between active duty/Active Reserve and Reserve Marines is that Reserve Marines are not commonly in a pay status unless they are on orders for 30 days or longer. Therefore, a set of MROWS orders is also generated in addition to the travel authorization submission in DTS. According to the DTS-R process maps (as of 22 March 2018), the DTS-R process will begin *only* after the MROWS orders are authenticated. For Marines using their unit's standard line of accounting who need some sort of travel reservations (flight, rental car, or lodging), the process occurs as follows:

- The traveler (or unit S-1) creates a DTS authorization and uploads the MROWS orders and coversheet into DTS.

- The authorization is routed to the travel management company (TMC) for review where the CTO books the flight, rental vehicle, and hotel.

- TMC routes the authorization to DMO to perform a review.

- DMO reviews the authorization and routes it back to the unit S-1 for a review of accuracy and completeness.

- The S-1 routes the authorization to the comptroller for fiscal certification and to apply the correct line of accounting.

- The unit S-1 activates the traveler's government travel charge card (if required).

- The comptroller routes the authorization to the approving official (AO) to approve the traveler's entitlements and mission.

- The AO approves the authorization and routes it to the TMC to book commercial transportation.

- The traveler executes their travel as directed by both the authorization and the MROWS orders.

(The figure on the next page provides a graphical representation of the new DTS-R Process.)

With all of the steps involved for both MROWS and DTS-R, the process for providing a Reserve Marine a set of orders and a flight for a two week AT exercise will likely take longer than the entire exercise period. There *must* be a faster way!

Current DMM Process and Proposed Process for Using a Day of Active Duty (DAD)

Fortunately for Reserve Marines, there is a method for paying them on a regular basis after performing inactive duty training (IDT) periods, which are more commonly known as drills. Each SMCR or IMA Marine has the ability to complete 48 drill periods per fiscal year, which is budgeted for by both Marine Forces Reserve and HQMC. The number of SMCR and IMA Marines who can belong to a unit and execute drills is commonly known by the term "authorized manning." For both IMA and SMCR Marines, the process for scheduling and paying a drill is very straightforward. The most common process using DMM is as follows:

- The IMA Marine requests drills or the inspector-instructor staff schedules drills for the SMCR Marines.

- Drills are approved by another Marine in the drilling Marine's chain of command.

- Once the drill periods (four hours each) have been performed, the drills are then mustered by a muster official in the Reserve Marine's chain of command who confirms that the Marine performed the scheduled drills as directed. This is commonly done using a muster sheet if the Marine who is mustering did not physically work next to the Marine who performed the drills.

- The mustered drills are then certified by an approver (normally an officer or senior SNCO).

- Certified drills are then exported to the unit diary where they trigger both a drill payment (based on the Marine's rank and time in service) and a retirement point for each drill period.

The time required to execute the five-step DMM process is normally less than half as long as the time required to create a set of Reserve orders in MROWS using the eleven-step process previously discussed. Therefore, I propose that drill manager be used to process pay for all orders periods that are less than 30 days long, instead of generating orders in MROWS. The only programming change required

DTS-R Authorization Process

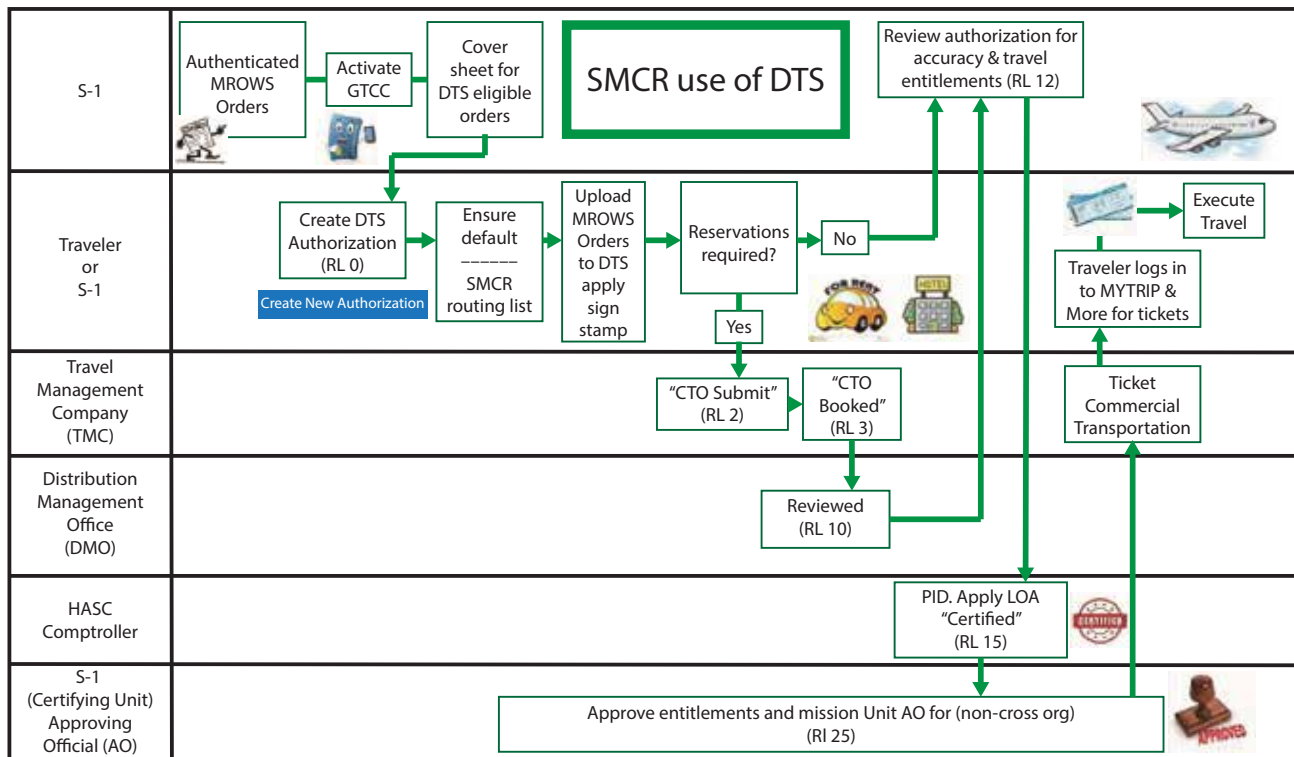


Figure 1. Source. DTS-R Program Office, MARFORRES, 27 April 2018.

in RTAMMS to permit this to occur is the addition of a new pay category for each 24-hour period of active duty, which I have affectionately called a day of active duty (DAD).

With the creation of the DAD payment type in DMM, Marines and their operational sponsors/S-1 sections would simply need to schedule the active duty days the same way they schedule regular drills. Once the DADs are scheduled in DMM, then the approval process for DTS-R would remain unchanged. To show that the DADs have already been approved in the DMM, each muster sheet or list of DADs could be printed off and uploaded during the DTS-R submission process. Once the period of active duty is complete, then the travel voucher would be submitted via DTS-R, and the DADs would be mustered, certified, and exported in DMM the same way that regular IDTs are currently processed for offsite IDT orders. Also, there would be no need for in-progress payments to be issued by the IPAC, since the DADs could regularly be exported at the end of every day, week, or whatever frequency the

operational sponsor/S-1 section chooses to account for and process them. Finally, there would be no need for a DD 1351-2 Travel Claim Form since the diary entry for pay would have already occurred.

Advantages and Disadvantages to the Newly Proposed Process

Every new proposition has both positive and negative aspects, and the use of a DAD instead of MROWS orders to authorize short-term orders periods (under 30 days) is certainly no exception to the rule. Essentially, this proposal would use DMM to cover the pay and allowances and DTS-R for travel and per diem expenses. This idea is comparable to the way in which DMM is currently used to manage the pay portion of offsite IDT orders. However, one major exception is that for offsite IDT orders, MROWS and T3 are now both currently being used instead of DTS-R. The chart below outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages to both courses of action (COAs). The current COA on the left is for when MROWS and DTS-R are used together, while

the newly proposed COA on the right combines DMM with DTS-R.

Obstacles to Implementation/Counter-Argument

Before the proposal to use DADs instead of MROWS orders will ever become a reality, a number of both technical and procedural challenges must be overcome. First and foremost, we must create a suitable substitute for the current set of MROWS orders. This might be done using a wizard or new module in DMM. Since RTAMMS is a Marine Corps system of record that can easily be updated, that would be the most logical program to be modified to serve in an MROWS-like capacity and create a new product that is similar to the DTS-R coversheet for a DAD. While not a full set of orders, the DAD coversheet will clearly show that the Marine has approval to travel from someone in his chain of command, and it will include pertinent travel information needed for DTS-R to verify the purpose, line of accounting, orders dates, and location(s).

Also, we would need a few minor changes to the current Marine Corps

Total Force System program or an alternate method of calculating how much money a Marine rated on a DAD. Since a DAD would include not only base pay but also time in service, basic allowance for housing, basic allowance for subsistence, and potentially cost of living allowance, it might be challenging to calculate. Therefore, the cost of each DAD would be very individualized. Furthermore, calculating the accurate price of a DAD could be adjusted by other factors such as a recent promotion, change of home address to a new zip code, or the addition of a dependent. In summary, auditing, oversight, and fiscal constraints must be setup and clearly conveyed to prevent potential problems such as sending a Marine with high active duty time into sanctuary, or allowing units to schedule more DADs than they have been allocated from their higher headquarters. This is comparable to the way in which additional training periods are currently managed for budgeting purposes. Only an authorized number of DADs for each Marine would be available to prevent Marines from scheduling more than their approved allotment. All these challenges and other potential issues must be thoroughly discussed and resolved prior to simply adding a new category of pay for Reserve Marines.

<p style="text-align: center;">Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orders provide a full explanation of all entitlements and tell the Marine exactly where to report for duty. - Hard hold process is in place to stop Marine from going on orders until certain "red flag" issues are satisfied. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer steps likely leads to faster approval speeds. - Less burden on Disbursing Office to process both DTS voucher & travel claim. - Marine received pay several days sooner. - No MROWS access required to process. - Fewer travel claims submitted to IPAC for processing Marine's pay and entitlements. - No need for reporting/detaching endorsements. - Current status of drill pay is transparent to Marine throughout process via DMM.
<p style="text-align: center;">Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More steps and entities involved in approval process for orders. - Travel claim required for final pay and allowances to be provided to Marine. - Requires MROWS access to process orders. - Greater number of travel claims sent to IPAC for processing Marine's pay and entitlements. - Reporting/detaching endorsements required for all reporting orders. - No e-mail provided to Marine throughout the process. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More responsibility places on I&I staff or Op Sponsor for mustering/paying Marines. - Hard hold items may be overlooked. - Primary residence address may remain unverified in MCTFS.

MROWS & DTS-R vs. DMM & DTS-R.

Way Ahead

DTS-R was introduced as a new method of travel for Reserve Marines in October 2018. It is superior to the legacy system for a few primary reasons, including: the Marine has some choices in flight selection, departure time, seat assignment, the ability to know travel itinerary earlier in advance of departure, and there is a faster process for submission of the travel voucher in DTS compared to a standard Reserve travel claim via a DD Form 1351-2. Unfortunately, because Reservists are not paid in the same manner as active duty Marines for periods of less than 30 days, these Reservists must use DTS in a different way, using what is known

as a Reserve profile (this is where the "-R" in "DTS-R" originates from).

However, the good news is that this new process can be designed and modified to fit our current administrative requirements. Marine leaders should be masters of, and not slaves to, the process itself. There is already a precedent set for using DMM for mustering periods of inactive duty, and also for settling the pay and allowance portion of Reserve orders whenever a Marine performs offsite IDT orders. The Marine Corps is able to implement changes or updates, and usually does each month, to its own

RTAMMS program. Software releases for RTAMMS will not affect DTS or MROWS, and this proposal would only impact orders periods less than 30 days when the Marine is not administratively joined to an active duty unit. I challenge and encourage Marine leaders to seriously consider this proposal and discover how much time and additional paperwork it would ultimately save both administrative sections and the Reserve Marine. Ultimately, this concept should help Reserve Marines receive pay faster as a reward for the dedication and service they provide to our great Nation.

