

Singapore

Question: Is there any change on the horizon to increase COLA for those of us serving in Singapore?

Answer: With the current strong U.S. dollar compared to the local Singapore dollar, the chance of COLA changing anytime soon does not look favorable. Singapore just completed the annual required Retail Price Scheduled (RPS) survey as required by JTR Appendix "M" that is due 30 September to DTMO. The annual RPS survey reports actual overseas prices by using a market basket survey in fourteen categories ranging from meats & dairy to household help. Once the RPS is reviewed by the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO)/Military Advisory Panel (MAP) they will announce the new official COLA index. We anticipate the results in the January to March 2016 time frame.

Additional Factors regarding the decrease in Overseas COLA Index in Singapore

Overseas COLA decrease - The history behind the COLA index drop from 168 was due to the currency change of the SGD from 1.2372 on 12/1/13, to 1.2970 on 2/1/14 (4.8% increase) index of 162. When the currency changes take effect you are able to purchase more local currency per US dollar, the COLA will then decrease as fewer US dollars are required to purchase the same level of goods and services.

Key factor for initial index decrease - During the last combine RPS/LPS survey conducted in August 2013, indicated that more purchases were being made in US dollars at either the Commissary/Exchange or through Internet or mail order. Thus, the percentages of purchases attributed in the more expensive local economy purchases decreased significantly.

Recent RPS - The last annual RPS was conducted in September 2014 resulted in COLA index drop to 148 which is a current rate. DTMO informed us that seven of the fourteen COLA categories, most notably, Food Away, Household Help and Day Care and Telephone/Internet were some key factors in the drop.

Question: Will women in the near future have to register for the Selective Service?

Answer: Not unless, and until, Congress changes the current *Military Selective Service Act*. The law currently limits the requirement for registration to males. A bill introduced in the House of Representatives in March, if enacted, would provide for registration of women; however, it has not progressed very far. If it does eventually pass in the House, it would still have to pass in the Senate, and then be referred for action by the President. It currently appears unlikely that this will come to pass this year.

Question: Can we get type III uniforms here in Singapore? It's hot here.

Answer: Sailors may submit uniform policy change recommendations via their chain of command to OPNAV (N1). Recommendations should reflect Navy-wide application with an eye towards standardization and uniform policy reduction. Uniform change proposals that have fleet-wide impact will be coordinated with Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command and Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet for endorsement. Recommendations are to be submitted in letter format with subject line request for uniform board policy change. For more additional update on guidance to get Singapore in Type III uniforms, please refer to NAVADMIN 164/12 (UNIFORM BOARD UPDATE).

As an alternative solution and potentially more immediate solution, the new lightweight NWU Type I is expected to be available for purchase this fall.

Question: 1 - Can anything be done to offset daycare costs that everyone has to pay?
2- What metric is used?
3 - What are the differences between Navy and State Department?
4 - Is there a possibility of a subsidy being implemented based on paygrade?

Answer: 1 - Unfortunately Singapore does not offer full-time command sponsored day care services owing to its small size. The cost for day care is partially offset by the Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) that service members receive.

2-The metric used for determining the cost for on base Child and Youth programs are based on total fixed income unless otherwise specified. Commander Naval Installations Command publishes the fees annually which can be found at <https://elibrary.cnic-n9portal.net/navyelib/files/pubs/FY%2015%20Fee%20Policy.pdf> The following is a summary of programs available at Singapore: Part-Day Preschool (ages 3 to 5), three days per week/three hours per day, at a cost of \$36 (\$4 per hour hourly care rate). Recreational School Age Program (grades K-6), five days per week/three hours per day, no cost. School Age Care Summer Day Camp (grades K-6), five days per week/six hours per day, rates based on total family income and established by CYP annual fee policy ranging from \$34-\$85 per week per child, with multi-child and other discounts available. Teen/Tween Program (grades 6-12), five days per week/three hours per day with extended hours on Fridays, no cost.

3 - Navy personnel (military and civilian) and State Department personnel fall under different agreements when it comes to subsidizing the Singapore government tax that is assessed for live-in help. This is another option commonly used to provide for day care. The U.S. government's embassy personnel are exempt from this tax, but Navy personnel (civilian & military) -- who are sponsored into the country by the Singapore Ministry of Defense -- are not exempt. The reasons behind this difference in benefits are due to the differences in bilateral agreements and regulations that treat diplomatic personnel differently.

4 - Day care cost is one of the fourteen Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) categories that affect the COLA Index. During the most recent survey that was conducted in September 2014, the Defense Transportation Management Office (DTMO) informed the Singapore Overseas COLA Coordinator that a drop in Help and Day Care cost were key factors in the decrease of the Overseas COLA Index for Singapore.

Question: Is there a way that this policy can be reviewed?

Answer: The Paternity/Adoption and Operational Deferment is currently under review by an OPNAV N13 working group to modernize military leave policies for childbirth and adoption, make these policies more inclusive for a variety of family types, and better align Paternity and Adoption leave policies in the Navy with those offered by civilian companies. The working group is currently gathering feedback and compiling responses from across the Fleets. A timeline to publish an updated Paternity/Adoption leave policy is unknown at this time. Additional information on the current Adoption Leave policy can be found in MILPERMAN 1050-420 (ADOPTION LEAVE).