



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

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OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

DEC 13 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM-FOA-DRU/CC DISTRIBUTION C

SUBJECT: Air Force Conference Policy Business Rules

- References: (a) Acting SECAF Memo, Air Force Conference Policy Update, Dec X, 2013
(b) OSD DCMO Memo, "*Implementation of Conference Oversight Requirements*," November 6, 2013
(c) *Department of Defense Conference Guidance*, Version 2.0, November 6, 2013
(d) Public Law Number 113-6 (P.L. 113-6), "*Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013*"
(e) AF/CV Memo, "*FY14 Spending Control Actions to Mitigate Budget Reduction Impacts*," September 25, 2013
(f) SecAF Memo, "*Air Force Conference Policy Update*," December 12, 2012
(g) OMB Memorandum, "*Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations*," May 12, 2012

This memorandum provides business rules for Air Force (AF) conference policy implementation, consistent with Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) November 2013 conference policy memorandum and the Acting Secretary's (Acting SECAF) delegations pursuant to that memorandum. Personnel addressing conference hosting or conference travel questions must keep in mind that conference policy must be read and applied in conjunction with current Department of Defense (DoD) and AF sequestration policy. Questions that are not covered in this memo should be addressed to Lt Col Mark Snow, SAF/AA, and Mr Dave Thomas, SAF/GCA.

Approval Authority:

If a MAJCOM plans to request approval for attendance at a non-DoD hosted conference for which costs are estimated to exceed \$500,000, it must first coordinate with other MAJCOMs to capture and include full AF-wide projected attendance and costs in its request to the Acting SECAF. All approvals must be in writing.

Attendance At Non-DoD Entity events:

Each year the number of non-AF hosted conferences and training opportunities grows significantly; some are long-standing events hosted by non-DoD entities supporting functional areas of the mission and others are for-profit hosted events, often utilizing AF speakers to generate commercial interest in fee-based attendance. Travel approval officials must carefully review the agenda for every non-AF hosted event to ensure that AF funds are not being used to pay a registration fee for AF Airmen to predominately hear AF speakers. While legal, this is not a wise or appropriate use of taxpayer funding. As a rule of thumb, where AF speakers exceed

30% of the presenters, approval authorities should inquire whether the AF is co-sponsoring the event, and if not, why not.

Where a non-Federal entity (NFE) offers to pay all travel-related expenses for an AF member to participate in a NFE-hosted conference (either as a speaker or an attendee), participation by that individual in the event may be approved by the appropriate local travel approval authority and approval is not required through the SECAF conference review process. In these situations, local approval authorities must still assess the need and purpose for any gifted TDY travel using a "mission critical" standard - since the man-hour cost to the AF remains a factor for travel approval purposes. Also, where the NFE will fund some or all of the costs of participation by some attendees at an event and the AF will fund the rest, the conference attendance approval package should reflect the gifted or granted non-AF funded attendance - so that the approval authority has a clear perspective of the overall number of AF attendees and associated costs. All granted or gifted travel must be appropriately accepted and reported in accordance with AF ethics rules and 31 USC §1353.

While DoD attendees at NFE events do not generally determine conference locations or registration fees, approving officials must be acutely aware of the public perception of conferences being held in "resort or vacation" locations, such as Las Vegas, Orlando, San Diego, Vail, CO, especially when conference dates coincide with holidays, major sporting events or other cultural events or are otherwise likely to raise concerns from a location and timing perspective. Mission essential determinations and appropriately limited attendance are critical to considering and approving AF participation in these conferences.

Particular attention must be paid to events organized by national level, professionally focused NFEs whose membership and/or governance is composed primarily of DOD and/or AF personnel. As a general rule, AF personnel may not plan or conduct NFE activities during their duty time or using government equipment or resources. Compliance with the various sections of the Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) is required, and legal advice must be obtained for clarification of the roles personnel may take in an official capacity in a particular event. For example, JER Section 3-300b allows limited excused absences for reasonable periods for personnel to voluntarily participate in activities of non-profit professional associations and learned societies; however, this provision does not justify TDY travel. Examples of this type of NFE includes the Logistics Officers Association, the Society of Military Orthopaedic Surgeons, the American Society of Military Comptrollers and the Society of American Military Engineers.

Widely Attended Gatherings (WAGs):

On occasion, a NFE may offer local personnel, as well as those on TDY status, free attendance at an event held in conjunction with a conference (for example a dinner). Organizers or proposed attendees should contact their servicing ethics office for advice on whether the offer of free attendance may be accepted (perhaps as a WAG), and if so, what limitations may apply.

Permissive TDY (PTDY):

Permissive TDY for military personnel or permissive travel at no expense to the government for civilian personnel to attend NFE conferences may only be approved as authorized by current AF and DoD policies (see AFI 36-3003, AFI 65-103 and the Joint Travel Regulations). Members

authorized PTDY to attend a NFE conference may not speak in an official capacity representing the AF or DOD as they are not in attendance in an approved official capacity.

Registration Fees:

Registration fees can be paid with appropriated funds when authorized. Many NFEs will provide no-fee registration for DoD personnel; however, AF personnel CANNOT solicit NFEs for no-cost or reduced cost registration or attendance. Registration costs must be captured on travel vouchers and per diem recoveries must be reduced by the value of any meals or incidentals included in registration fees paid by the AF. Where registration fees include activities for which payment with official funds is not allowed or is questionable, those seeking approval to attend should inquire whether the registration fee for those activities is severable, that is whether the cost of award banquets, tours, social activities and similar events can be deducted from the registration costs paid by AF funds. Individual AF attendees may incur those costs out of pocket if desired. Attendees should be attuned to the public perception of these events (event content, cost, location) and should not participate in those that would cast the AF in negative light. For example, registration fees may include a half-day sightseeing tour during the business hours of a conference. This expense cannot be funded by the AF as AF attendees should be at the conference attending to their mission purpose. Similarly, participation in golf outings should only occur when the individual is in a leave status and on clearly personal time for which no per diem should be earned. Participation in social or recreational activities should not increase the duration of official travel or the cost to the AF, for example, award banquets, requiring another night stay at the venue should not be attended at AF expense.

Prohibited Conference Expenses:

OSD guidance specifically states that entertainment-related expenses are expressly prohibited as part of DoD-hosted conferences. Examples include motivational speakers, musicians, extraneous promotional items, tickets to recreational activities and the production of non-substantive audio/visual materials. Ensure AF-hosted conferences exclude these prohibited costs; attendees at NFE events must explore the severability of costs to preclude these types of expenses to the AF.

Unless specifically addressed in a contract, the AF will not use appropriated, non-appropriated or gifted funds to pay for attendance by contractors at any conference. Unless otherwise specifically provided, contractors attending conferences may not “represent” the AF or without advance approval use AF information in any presentation.

Co-Sponsorships:

AF entities should not enter into co-sponsorship relationships with NFEs or other government agencies without appropriate written legal review and approval of a document that formalizes the co-sponsorship arrangement. The approval authority for co-sponsorship agreements and co-sponsored events will be SAF/AA. This designation supersedes the guidance found in AFI 61-205, Sponsoring or Co-Sponsoring, Conducting, and Presenting DoD-Related Scientific Papers at Unclassified and Classified Conferences, Symposia, and Other Similar Meetings (25 July 1994). Packages seeking approval of a co-sponsorship arrangement and the event itself can be pursued in parallel, but action on final conference approval must not be taken until the co-sponsorship is approved, and no funds may be committed or expended until final conference

approval is received. Events hosted with NATO or similar international military organizations should be based upon a memorandum of agreement to outline roles, responsibilities and fiduciary relationships of the organizing parties. If the number of AF personnel sought as speakers at a NFE-hosted event exceeds 30% of the projected agenda, then an approved co-sponsorship arrangement is required. Co-sponsorship may not be used as a mechanism for fundraising by a NFE. Lastly, AF participants should not pay registration fees (beyond costs for meals and breaks) for co-sponsored activities absent SAF/AA approval.

Speakers:

Under current AF sequestration and conference policy, AF personnel who are invited to speak at a non-DoD hosted conference must ensure that they have obtained the following advance approvals: 1) speaker engagement review by the servicing ethics office (in coordination with public affairs); 2) Public Affairs Security and Policy Review of proposed remarks IAW AFI 35-102; and 3) conference attendance review by appropriate authority (to include an assessment of any required travel using sequestration guidance). An exception to this third requirement exists for speakers at events in the local area of the installation of assignment when there is “no cost” to the AF (as discussed below).

Spouse Travel:

Any AF-funded spouse travel in conjunction with conference attendance must be approved in accordance with AF sequestration, travel and fiscal policy. Current sequestration policy allows for approval of officially-funded spouse travel for certain pre-command courses. Requests for spouse travel for annual MAJCOM/CC-hosted “commander conferences” or any other conference should be included with the exception to policy request for approval of the event (per sequestration guidance). Requests for spouse travel can be processed in parallel with conference approval requests.

Conference Planners:

No-cost or fee-based conference planners can be used in support of AF-hosted activities; however, the use of fee-based conference planners is highly discouraged and, as such, their use must be approved prior to obligation of funds by the conference approval authority IAW conference approval delegations. When using a conference planner, no prohibited conference expenses can be included and competitive procedures must be followed to avoid the appearance of government impropriety.

“No-cost” Attendance at Conferences:

Generally “no-cost” attendance means that no appropriated funds will be expended for conference attendance, either for registration or travel costs. It does not include the fixed costs of the salaries of the AF attendees, who must have a mission critical reason to attend the event. “No-cost” has been interpreted to include situations with minor “incidental” costs, such as a parking fee or metro use to and from an event. In general, incidental costs should not exceed \$20 per day per attendee, and should not exceed \$200 for an event. Individual speakers do not require conference approval to attend a “no-cost” event in their role as a speaker.

Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Funded Events:

FMS or State Department funded events generally do not require approval through the SECAF conference approval process unless expenses paid with AF appropriated funds are incurred to hold, support or participate in the event. Most programs are supported by a government to government agreement, documented by a Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) between the US and the participating foreign government. Program management reviews, financial management reviews, security assistance management reviews, technical coordination program workshops and international engine management program workshops are included in this exception to conference approval policy.

While separate conference approval is not required, all AF organizers and attendees at FMS funded events should be cost conscious, maximize hosting events on military/federal installations, minimize attendance, and apply the same policies on inclusion of or attendance at social/cultural events. Any "gifted" or granted travel or other costs must be approved and reported in accordance with 31 USC §1353 and DoD and AF ethics rules. It is recommended that approval of such events be formally documented in a manner that reflects the consideration of the factors mentioned above and any other pertinent items.

Bi-lateral and multi-lateral international cooperative engagements, such as International Military Education and Training, and other regional assistance programs are exempt from the requirement to obtain approval via the SECAF's conference approval process.

Industry Days:

Industry Days hosted by AF, for the sole purpose of sharing requirement and acquisition program information with a wide range of vendors, are not conferences and do not require approval via the SECAF's conference approval process. However, many NFEs, using AF speakers and charging attendance or registration fees, wish to host "Industry Days." These types of NFE events, along with any AF-hosted events that include many of the attributes of a conference as discussed in DoD guidance, should be considered conferences and require appropriate approval.

Continuing Education Units (CEUs)/Credits:

Obtaining CEUs is NOT a sufficient sole or primary reason to justify attendance at a conference at AF expense. Attendees must have a clearly articulated mission requirement to attend; earning CEUs must be, at most, an ancillary benefit to attendance.

Recruiting Coordination:

Prior to seeking approval for attendance at NFE conferences in which military and civilian recruiting is expected to play a significant role (e.g. STEM or diversity activities), organizers must coordinate with the AF Recruiting Service, the AF Personnel Center and the Air Force Academy as appropriate. Although recruiting is generally exempt from conference approval, the full costs of AF participation must be captured so as to ensure approval authorities are fully apprised of the level and cost of AF participation. Further, costs of participation should be coordinated and minimized at all NFE conference recruiting activities, for example booth sharing, reduction in the number of personnel, and elimination of other redundancies.

Reporting:

Conference approval packages at all levels must include a legal review and cost analysis. Documented approval or disapproval must be kept in accordance with the DOD Conference Guidance (Reference (b) above), i.e. 5 years. *(Note: the duration of this requirement is longer than normal records retention rules so special attention is required).* The OSD guidance at Reference (a) outlines annual and on-going reporting for DoD and non-DoD hosted conferences. As input into the DoD Conference Tool is not possible at the MAJCOM level, SAF/AA will collect conference data and post it as required. In order to meet the seven (7) day requirement for posting approvals for any NFE conference costing more than \$20,000, SAF/AA must receive your approval within three (3) business days of approval. Also, within 15 days of the completion of the conference, SAF/AA must receive the requesting organization's updated costs and after action reports for submission to the OSD website. The AF organization should expect compliance with these requirements to be audited by both GAO and AFAA. Send these reports to SAF/AA at usaf.pentagon.saf-aa-conferences.mbx.workflow@mail.mil

The Office of Management and Budget regulations and Public Law 113-6 require annual public reporting on any conference DoD hosts where the total expenses exceed \$100,000. Pages 19-21 of the OSD guidance provide details on what must be reported to SAF/AA. SAF/AA will provide the collected data to OSD.

All personnel delegated approval authority will ensure compliance with the DoD and AF Conference Guidance. Organizers and travel approval authorities at all levels are charged with continuing good stewardship of taxpayer funds, as well as appropriate use of Airmen's time

All questions regarding the interpretation or application of the policies and procedures in the OSD DCMO memorandum and the business rules, as well as recommendations regarding improvements in conference approval processing or oversight should be referred to SAF/AA.



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