

## **BDSUS STANDING INSTRUCTIONS**

This document forms part of BDSUS SOPs and is for reference by all BDSUS personnel

**Title:** BDSUS COVID19 BORDER MEASURES EXEMPTIONS

**Subject Area:** J1 Military Administration

**Classification:** Official

**Applies:** Immediately

**Issued:** 25 Nov 2020

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### **File Reference:**

**Sponsor:** SO2 J1

**Contact:** SO2 J1

**Email:** BDSUS-SpGp-J1-SO2@mod.gov.uk

**Telephone:** Military 202 588 6866  
Civilian

### References:

A. Defence Advice Note 18 (DAN 18): COVID-19 Health Measures at The Border and Effects on Delivering Defence Tasks V6.7 Dated 14 May 2021

### **GENERAL**

1. This SOP details how BDSUS will support individuals seeking entry to the UK and the application of exemptions from some or all COVID-19 border restrictions where this can be justified for exceptional duty personnel or welfare resilience purposes. Regardless of exemption, personnel will be expected to limit contact/movement to only that authorised and to abide by required protection measures for the period of isolation. This SOP is subordinate to the direction in, and should be read in conjunction with, Ref A.

### **PRE-DEPARTURE COVID-19 TESTING**

2. There is a legal requirement for individuals arriving from outside the common travel area into the UK to possess a notification of a negative COVID-19 test result before departure. This requirement applies to all travellers over the age of 11 years arriving by land, sea or air. It is expected that both the travel operator at check-in and Border Force on arrival will request to see proof of a negative test result. Para 2.1 – 2.2, Sect 2 to Ref A applies.

### **EXEMPTIONS FROM PRE-DEPARTURE TESTING**

3. In accordance with HMG direction both the MOD and BDSUS will, by default, comply with the requirement for pre-departure COVID-19 testing for travellers arriving into the UK. BDSUS will only use an exemption where it is either not practicable or there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate it, such as convalescence, urgency of travel or lack of testing.

4. In line with the COVID-19 review process for management of overseas Defence activity, BDSUS exemptions must be authorized by the Defence Attaché (DA). This may be delegated by the 2\* risk owner at their discretion, but not below 1\*. Para 2.3 – 2.13, Sect 2 to Ref A applies.

## REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS

5. Full details of reimbursement for both Service Personnel (SP) and MOD Civil Servants via either JPA iExpenses or HR Form 1108 are contained within Para 2.14, Sect 2 to Ref A.

## EXEMPTIONS TO SELF-ISOLATION

6. The use of exemptions should be limited and balanced with the need to keep the risk of importation and transmission of COVID-19 as low as reasonably practicable. The Defence exemption applies in three circumstances and covers Crown servants (including UK Armed Forces and MOD civil servants), government contractors and visiting forces:

- a. **Defence (Duty) Exemption.** Ministerial direction is clear that exemptions for essential Defence activities should be used sparingly, approved at senior levels (2\* level, but may be delegated to 1\* level), and reported centrally. **The exemption will only apply to the pursuit and engagement in the Defence duties authorized**, otherwise isolation procedures are to be adhered to. Para 3.7.2 – 3.7.14, Sect 3 to Ref A applies.
- b. **Personnel (Welfare) Resilience Exemption.** For resilience and welfare purposes, an exemption from self-isolation, but not data provision (ie Passenger Locator Form), may be approved for a Crown servant and their dependents on a non-operational overseas posting, who have been constrained in their ability to return to the UK for an extended period. Categories include access to children located in UK, single personnel or welfare reasons approved by a CO or Line Manager. **The exemption will only apply to those locations authorized to be visited during the isolation period** and does not extend to general contact with the UK population. Such locations will normally be limited to a small number of close family and friends (2-3 locations). Para 3.7.15 – 3.7.16, Sect 3 to Ref A applies.
- c. **Additional Exemptions.** The regulations permit an individual to leave the place where they are self-isolating on compassionate and medical grounds. This category is not covered by this SOP. Further detail can be found within Para 3.7.17 – 3.7.21, Sect 3 to Ref A.

7. **Leave.** Exemptions are not usually necessary for the approval of a leave journey back to the UK, with the expectation that those travelling to see family and friends on leave will isolate in the first leave location until free to move following self-isolation (which may be reduced using the 5-day Test to Release where applicable, at own cost, see below). A Personnel Resilience Exemption from isolation may be requested where a welfare justification can be provided, such as limited time in the UK, multiple family members to visit, extended separation from family due to COVID etc. This should also be mitigated as much as possible by specifying and limiting the number of locations during the isolation period. Vaccination status of the travellers will also assist BDSUS decision making (based on CDC advice), but is at this point not the determining factor in the UK.

## TEST TO RELEASE

8. Test to Release is a scheme that offers the opportunity to reduce the self-isolation period from 10 days to approximately 5-7 days using COVID-19 testing. The stated aim of this strategy is to protect the capacity of NHS Test and Trace. The Test to Release scheme is separate from any exemption and should be considered for use ahead of the Defence or Personnel Resilience

exemptions. Defence will reimburse duty costs incurred for a private COVID-19 tests taken under the Test to Release scheme in the circumstances listed in Para 4.5, Sect 4 to Ref A.

9. **At present the Test to Release scheme is only available to individuals whose self-isolation address is in England.** Para 4.1 – 4.4, Sect 4 to Ref A applies. Full details for opting into the Test to Release scheme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-test-to-release-for-international-travel>

## **PUBLIC HEALTH MITIGATIONS**

10. Where an exemption to self-isolation is granted, mitigations should be employed to maintain public health protections and limit the risks associated with introducing COVID-19 cases from abroad. In all circumstances any national, regional and local restrictions must be adhered to. **This will include any required tests, such as the compulsory Day 2 and 8 tests in the UK.** All mitigation procedures are to be annotated within Annex A. This currently includes the requirement for compulsory testing in the UK on Days 2 and 8 after arrival.

11. **Vaccinations.** The COVID-19 vaccination status of travelers will **not** currently guarantee travel/air passage or an exemption from isolation. BDSUS will consider the vaccination status of travelers on a case-by-case basis as part of the application process.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

12. The SPO 2\* authority for BDSUS use of Defence and Personnel Resilience exemptions for Military personnel, Crown servants and their immediate family members are the Defence Attaché and Director USA. Requests for exemptions are to be processed as follows:

a. **BDSUS.** All BDSUS exemption requests are to be staffed to the BDSUS SO2 J1 (BDSUS-Sp-Gp-J1-SO2@mod.gov.uk) via the individual's direct CoC/LM at least 21 days prior to any planned departure for any leave journey. For duty and urgent resilience applications this can be reduced to 10 days-notice but short notice may result in delays to travel. SO2 J1 will then staff to the relevant 2-star based on Line Management chain.

b. **Non-BDSUS.** Personnel assigned in the US under TLBs and 2\* output owners other than BDSUS should in the first instance seek exemptions through their own chain of command. As per Reference A, this authority to grant a Defence Exemption may be delegated by the 2\* owner to 1\* and for Personnel Resilience reasons to OF5 within their organization where welfare considerations dictate. All approved requests are to be copied to SO2 J1 BDSUS for central recording. Where a UK 2\* chain of command is unclear the Defence Attaché will consider Personnel Resilience Waivers from the wider non-BDSUS footprint.

**APPLICATION FOR SELF-ISOLATION EXEMPTIONS**

<b>Date of Submission</b>	
<b>Service Number</b>	
<b>Rank/Grade</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	
<b>Organization/Department</b> (to include current location)	
<b>Date of Planned UK Entry</b>	
<b>Date of Planned UK Departure</b>	
<b>Criteria under which exemption is sought</b> (highlight in yellow)	<p><b>Defence Exemption (delete if not applicable):</b></p> <p>a. To undertake work necessary to the delivery of essential Defence activities; or</p> <p>b. have travelled from the Common Travel Area<sup>1</sup> or an exempt country or territory on a vessel or aircraft of the UK Armed Forces or a visiting force and that vessel or aircraft has not taken on any persons, had transit stop in any non-exempt country or territory<sup>2</sup>, or</p> <p>c. have undertaken a continuous period of at least 14 days aboard a vessel of the UK Armed Forces or a visiting force and that vessel has not taken on any persons or docked in any port outside of the Common Travel Area for a period of at least 14 days immediately preceding it's arrival in the United Kingdom.</p> <p><b>Personnel Resilience Exemption (delete if not applicable):</b></p> <p>a. To collect/escort/provide care to my children who attend a UK education establishment;</p> <p>b. Geographically dislocated from spouses or long-term relationship<sup>3</sup> partner.</p> <p>c. Required to comply with Court directed child access arrangements.</p> <p>d. To provide respite from the stressful effects of COVID-19 restrictions upon single personnel living in shared Defence accommodation.</p> <p>e. And other cases where the individual's Chain of Command/Line Management assess that it is required for welfare reasons.</p>

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<sup>1</sup> The United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

<sup>2</sup> A transit stop is a stop where passengers can get on and off. You don't need to self-isolate beyond normal timescales if, during your transit stop in a non-exempt country, territory or region: no new passengers get on; no-one no-board gets off and mixes with people outside; passengers get off but do not get back on.

<sup>3</sup> An established Long-Term Relationship (LTR€) which is recognised by Defence and recorded appropriately on JPA.

<b>Details of Additional Individuals requiring exemption</b>	
<b>Locations to be visited</b> (include any location that you intend to visit during the isolation period (first 10 days, 7 if intending to Test to Release))	

<b>Justification</b> (Provide a full justification of the reason for the travel and impact if not granted)	
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<b>Mitigations</b> (Detail the measures you intend to employ to reduce risk to those you are due to meet, including vaccination status of all travelers)
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**By completing this document, I confirm that the travelling party will fully comply with the regulations outside of the exempted event;**

- a. by self-isolating at the approved accommodation address when not directly engaged in the specific activity for which the exemption has been granted;**
- b. maintenance of travel and contact records for 28 days, to enable tracing to be carried out in the event of exempt individuals developing symptoms;**
- c. and adhering to the COVID-19 countermeasures during the first 14 days for asymptomatic carriers of the virus.**

<b>Signature</b>	
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<b>2* Recommendations</b>	
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<b>Approval</b>	
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**Once complete, email Annex A (only) directly to [BDSUS-SpGp-J1-SO2@mod.gov.uk](mailto:BDSUS-SpGp-J1-SO2@mod.gov.uk)  
21 days prior to planned departure**