

Security

For the past several weeks, Human Resources and Security, which includes the DDSLs (Director's Division Security Liaison)) and the Chief of Security (Director's Executive Assistant (DEA-S)), have been fielding various complaints and frustrations on a wide variety of topics related to enrollment packages. The most common complaints are:

“Why it is taking so long for someone to come off ‘AP’ status;”

“Why is someone listed as “AP” when they enrolled with a boating safety certificate? They should automatically become “BQ” once their enrollment package is received at DIRAUX.”

“What is “AP,” “IQ” and “BQ?”

“When a package is returned by SECCEN (Security Center) or DIRAUX (Director of Auxiliary) for errors or mistakes, what do I do?”

First, everyone should know the process flow as to what happens to an enrollment package once it leaves the flotilla's hands. If the process flow is known, fewer questions should be asked.

Second, there should be no questions as to what is “AP,” “IQ,” and “BQ” or why someone has to remain in “AP” status until the completion of their background investigation. All members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, especially leaders, have a responsibility to read and understand the [Coast Guard Auxiliary Manual](#). The Manual is our Bible, so to speak. It is mandatory reading for all flotilla commanders. If you have a question on something, the answer is likely in the Auxiliary Manual. Those who served in the Navy and/or Coast Guard know that answers to most questions were found in the Navy Regs. book. When a “CO” went by the “book,” the “book” they were referring to was Navy Regs. The Coast Guard Auxiliary “book” is the Coast Guard Auxiliary Manual. That manual is not an Auxiliary publication. It is a Coast Guard publication, also known as COMDINST M16790.1G. “COMDINST” is a military acronym for Commandant Instructions. All elected leaders must have a working knowledge of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Manual to properly do their job.

While no one is expected to memorize the contents of the Manual, all should have a basic knowledge and understanding of its contents. If you have that understanding of the Manual, when a question arises, you will know where to look it up.

Chapter 8, Sections B of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Manual clearly defines what “AP,” “IQ” and “BQ” is. This section also explains why someone remains in “AP” status, and what they can and cannot do while “AP.”

Here is the process flow for a new or re-enrollment application:

Step One: Applicant, following all instructions and captions on the application, submits enrollment package to the flotilla with all required documentation. Step One should involve at least three separate steps: Applicant submission, flotilla staff review, FC or final review. It should not go from applicant to flotilla staff to DDSL. Review should be a two person process. Someone has to do a final review, after an initial review is done. A final review should never be conducted at a flotilla or division meeting.

Step Two: The flotilla commander or designee performs a final review of the entire package to be sure it is filled out according to the instructions. All boxes should be filled in or marked “N/A. An “N/A assures DIRAUX and SECCEN that the box was read and understood. If a box is left blank, no one will know if the box was actually read and understood, or accidentally overlooked.

In addition to assuring that the application does not contain errors or omissions, the flotilla commander also has the responsibility to review the fingerprints. It does not take a fingerprint expert to review fingerprints. All fingerprint lines, called ridge lines, must be visible. This allows for fingerprint classification. When the lines are not visible due to too much ink, smudging or incorrect rolling, fingerprint classification cannot be done, as such; SECCEN will suspend the investigative process and the application, pending submission of new fingerprint cards.

The fingerprint impression below on the left is a correctly rolled finger. If all the impressions look like that, the fingerprints will be classifiable. If they are smudged, have too much ink, or if part of the finger is missing due to incorrect rolling, the fingerprint cards will be rejected. The impression on the right is an incorrectly rolled finger.



CORRECT



INCORRECT

This part deserves repeating. The primary person responsible for ensuring that an enrollment package is one hundred percent correct, completely free of mistakes and omissions, all required documents are attached to the application including perfectly rolled fingerprints, is the flotilla commander. If the FC delegates that responsibility, the FC is still responsible.

Step Three: The flotilla commander or designee sends the enrollment package to the DDSL, using regular or Priority Mail. Certified Mail at this stage should not be used. If delivery confirmation is desired, although not required, the flotilla should use USPS Tracking for First-Class Parcel Mail. If the package is thick or close to thirteen ounces, Priority Mail should be used. All Priority Mail comes with tracking. There is no need to use Certified Mail. Certified Mail by the flotillas is costly and delays the delivery process to the DDSL. Certified Mail is used by the DDSLs and DIRAUX.

Step Four: The DDSL reviews the application package.

Step Five: If the DDSL determines the package is acceptable for submission, the package is sent to DIRAUX using Certified Mail or Certified Priority Mail. If the application is not acceptable, the package is sent to the appropriate flotilla commander. The flotilla commander will always be the recipient of the returned application, regardless of who originally sent the package to the DDSL. The DDSL does maintain some type of log as to the receiving and forwarding of each application package. If the application is returned to the flotilla, the process starts all over again at Step One.

Step Six: DIRAUX reviews the application, enters all information into AUXDATA and issues an ID number to the enrollee usually within two weeks after receiving it.

Step Seven: DIRAUX submits application to the USCG Security Center (SECCEN) in Washington, D.C.

Step Eight: SECCEN notifies DIRAUX of the status of their investigation. If DIRAUX rejects the application missing information, (blank spaces and/or fingerprints) it is returned to the DDSL.

Step Nine: If applicant received a favorable PSI (Personal Security Investigation), DIRAUX elevates the enrollee to either IQ or BQ status. If applicant received an unfavorable review, DIRAUX determines if the applicant is to be disenrolled or issued a waiver.

The investigative process for a normal enrollee takes upwards of eight months or more to complete. A re-enrollee can take longer. An enrollee with various background issues can take the same amount of time or more, depending on the issues. All of this is for an application packages that does not contain any errors or omissions.

Once an application leaves the hands of the DDSL, it becomes a U.S. Coast Guard matter. Although DDSLs and the Chief of Security are DIRAUX appointments, we are still Auxiliarists. Once the package is in the Federal Building in Miami, it is in Coast Guard hands. The Auxiliary is no longer part of the process.

Once an enrollment application is sent to SECCEN in Washington, D.C. for investigation, it becomes a SECCEN matter. DIRAUX is no longer involved in the application process, unless issues arise. When a package arrives at SECCEN, other agencies eventually become involved. In addition to SECCEN, there may be contracting agencies that actually conduct the background investigation. After SECCEN, the Officer of Personnel Management (OPM) is involved. In addition, at least one fingerprint card is transmitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Anywhere along the process flow, questions may arise regarding the contents of an application. Those questions may be directed to the applicant directly by a SECCEN investigator, through the Director's Office directly to the applicant if sensitive, or through the DEA-S to the DDSL. Whenever a question arises, for whatever reason, it is essential that a prompt reply be given.

Recently, there has been a rash of applications rejected by SECCEN for various reasons. While it is human nature to occasionally make a mistake or overlook something, these mistakes cause a delay in the investigative processing. The more serious the mistake, the bigger the delay. In some instances, major errors will result in the suspension of the PSI process, with the entire application being returned to DIRAUX for correction. The end result of these mistakes is frustration at the flotilla level, particularly with the applicant. Understand that when a SECCEN rejection occurs, seven to eight months have already elapsed since initial enrollment.

When the correct information is resubmitted to SECCEN, two things may occur: the investigative process may resume immediately, or the investigation will be delayed. An additional delay can occur if the investigator takes on other cases pending receipt of the resubmitted Auxiliary information. Other delays can occur if there is a new Coast Guard Recruit Training Class (Boot Camp), or new cadets at the Coast Guard Academy.

Is there causation for these mistakes? Absolutely. Since errors and omissions are common, it is absolutely essential that we be vigilant in finding these errors before the packages are sent to DIRAUX. That vigilance must start at the flotilla level. Flotilla personnel should not feel offended by handing an application back to an applicant, telling them it needs to be redone or corrected. If not corrected at the flotilla level, somewhere along the line the package will be returned or additional information requested. If all the captions and instructions on the application are followed to the letter, there will not be any mistakes.

My final area of discussion deals with recent SECCEN application rejections where flotillas, after being sent notifications from their DDSL that additional information is needed for a specific application, are sending requests directly to the DSO-HR or through the D7 Help Desk inquiring as to "I don't understand what is needed," or "What do I do with the information once I receive it from the applicant."

This is very simple to solve. When additional information is required by SECCEN, the DDSL will send an e-mail to the flotilla commander notifying them that the application is being delayed or suspended. The message will also include exactly what information and/or documentation is required. Once the flotilla commander receives that information from the applicant, the flotilla commander, or designee, will forward that to the DDSL. In some cases the information required will be hard copy, as in fingerprints or pages that require signatures. Other cases it will be information that can be sent scanned or simply information in a message. Regardless of what is required, it goes from the flotilla to the DDSL. The DDSL will always be the conduit for relaying information. To cut down the process time, I have directed all DDSLs to send the information directly to DIRAUX in Miami, bypassing me. Once that information is sent to Miami, DIRAUX then sends it to SECCEN. Understand, this exchange of information usually occurs after six to eight months have elapsed. So, it would not be unreasonable to add an additional two to four months of investigative process.

I want to close by reminding all that signatures on enrollment applications can "expire." The date inserted next to a signature is time sensitive, particularly that on Page Five, which is the Release of Information page. The Page 5 date is good for two years. If a problem arises with the application and a year has already elapsed since the enrollment application was originally submitted, SECCEN may require a new Page 5, giving them a document that is good for two years, not one. Remember, when filling out an application, the dates should be the very last entry.

A simple solution to expediting the enrollment process is to be vigilant in reviewing applications. The goal should be zero errors. Many divisions have zero application returns, simply because they are vigilant in the review process.

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