



# BEYOND BAHRAIN

Family Newsletter • Naval Amphibious Force, Task Force 51 / 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade

Update #02 • 13 May 2026

Major Lorna Lynott- Unit Readiness Coordinator

## NEXT KEY DATE

**15 May — DODEA School Decision**

## SOFA EXPIRATION

**30 June — KMC Germany**

## THE 180-DAY HORIZON: PLANNING YOUR FAMILY'S NEXT CHAPTER

This newsletter is intended to give you **clear information and a full range of options** so you can make the best decision for your family's circumstances. Nothing in this communication mandates a specific course of action. Our goal is to ensure you are informed.

**Regarding Unit Posture:** As of now, current plans have Task Force 51/5 reposturing to another location within the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). However, until Headquarters Marine Corps completes the administrative processes associated with this transition, the official Permanent Duty Station (PDS) for the majority of our service members will remain Bahrain - to include housing entitlements and associated administrative records. In practice, service members will likely be operating forward from other locations in the region rather than from NSA Bahrain.

**Regarding the 180-Day Threshold:** Per the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), families would normally transition from "Safe Haven" to "Designated Location" status at 180 days, shifting entitlements from per diem to standard Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). However, the Under Secretary of War (USW) has been actively engaged on behalf of families throughout this process and has previously issued exceptions and declarations that adjusted standard JTR policy. We anticipate the USW will issue further guidance regarding entitlements and safe haven dispositions as we approach this threshold. We will communicate any updates immediately as they are received. **The Under Secretary of War has previously issued exceptions and adjustments to standard JTR timelines throughout this process.**

## WIN OF THE WEEK



22 of 23 families have had their entitlements paid out. Outstanding work by all — thank you for your patience and coordination.

## FAMILY OPTIONS: YOUR PATH FORWARD

*Review each option and discuss it with your service member before making any formal declarations.*

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### **Summer 2026 Movers** · Service member PCS'ing this summer

**Suggested Approach:** Consider moving your Safe Haven to your next duty station now. When your Safe Haven status expires at the 180-day mark, entitlements will automatically transition to BAH at the new location, ensuring a seamless link-up with your service member.

**Likely Outcome:** A smooth, uninterrupted transition aligned with your service member's upcoming PCS.



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## Not returning to Bahrain (If Ordered Departure Is Lifted)

*Service member remaining through Summer 2027–28*

**Suggested Approach:** Options include relocating to a stateside location of your choosing (such as your Home of Record), Tampa FL (near TF 51/5 Higher Headquarters). This will require an Early Return of Dependents (ERD) request. Entitlements will change.

**Likely Outcome:** Stability and access to a strong command support network, with flexibility to choose what works best for your family.

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## Returning to Bahrain (If Ordered Departure Is Lifted)

*Families whose PDS remains Bahrain*

**Suggested Approach:** If the Ordered Departure is lifted, families who's official PDS is Bahrain are not required to choose an alternate designated location. You retain the right to return to Bahrain and reside there. Your service member will most likely be operating from another location in the AOR in a Temporary Duty (TDY) status and will not be co-located on a daily basis. Leave will be afforded to the servicemember when operationally feasible.

**Likely Outcome:** You are home at your official PDS with full entitlements intact. Your Bahrain community and support network remain available to you, with the understanding that your service member's day-to-day presence will be limited by operational requirements.

## i Addressing the Question: “Will We Return to Bahrain?”

Many of you have seen the *Stars and Stripes* article (5 May 2026) regarding Admiral Cooper's stated goal to return families to Bahrain. We share that desire, and want to be transparent about the two separate questions involved:

**NSA Bahrain (The Installation):** CENTCOM continues working toward making the installation safe for families. Timelines remain fluid and have not been officially confirmed.

**TF 51/5 Mission Posture:** Regardless of when the base may reopen, TF 51/5's operational posture is transitioning. Service Members will likely be operating forward from locations across the CENTCOM AOR.

**Our Guidance:** We are providing this information now so your family can make informed decisions based on where your Service Member will be operating, rather than waiting on regional timelines that may not align with your school year, housing, or employment needs.



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## HOUSEHOLD GOODS (HHG) & PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES (POV)

*Moving from an OCONUS environment involves significant logistical timelines — please plan accordingly.*

**Household Goods:** At the minimum, Service Members will have the opportunity to return to Bahrain to pack out their HHG. Due to the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz (SOH), transit times are significantly impacted. Families should plan for an extended period without their full shipment.

**Privately Owned Vehicles:** Vehicles eligible for shipment to the United States will be processed; however, CONUS shipping timelines are currently extended. Prepare for your vehicle to remain in transit for an extended duration.

### Operation EPIC FURRY — Pet Retrieval Status

The mission to retrieve pets is currently on hold pending legal and diplomatic approvals. We are actively advocating for a resolution. If a charter flight cannot be arranged, Marines and Sailors returning to Bahrain for pack-out will have the ability to retrieve pets at that time. We ask for your patience as we work through the necessary approvals.

## ORDERED DEPARTURE STATUS & PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

**Current Assessment:** We anticipate the current Ordered Departure will likely reach its 180-day expiration rather than being lifted early. Families should plan accordingly.

**If the OD Is Lifted:** Families will be given approximately 30 days to coordinate their moves, finalize travel claims, and complete all administrative actions. If the OD is lifted and your official PDS remains Bahrain, you are not required to choose an alternate designated location — returning to Bahrain is a valid and fully supported option.

**Key Lesson:** Early planning is the single most effective way to reduce administrative friction during this transition. We encourage all families to identify their preferred path forward now, even if final decisions have not yet been made.

## EDUCATION & SUMMER TRANSITION PLANNING

With the school year wrapping up, families currently have maximum flexibility to plan their next steps.

**Bahrain School Decision:** DOWEA will provide an update regarding the Bahrain school for the next school year on 15 May 2026. Families who wish to re-enroll should understand that your service member will most likely be operating from another location in the AOR in a TDY status during this period.

**Safe Haven Flexibility:** You are not locked in your current Safe Haven location. If you wish to relocate closer to family or move to your next destination before the school year ends, that is an available option. Once you choose a new location, it will remain your designated Safe Haven until the Ordered Departure is lifted or your service member PCS's.



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## GERMANY-SPECIFIC UPDATE: KMC SAFE HAVEN TRANSITION

### ⚠ Action Required: KMC No Longer Approved After 30 June 2026

The Under Secretary of War issued updated guidance on 7 May 2026 directing that the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC) in Germany **will no longer be an approved alternate safe haven location effective 30 June 2026**. Families currently residing in KMC are directed to begin planning for selection of, and travel to, an authorized safe haven location no later than 30 June 2026.

**180-Day Clock:** For families of DoD Service members, the 180-day safe haven allowance period will begin anew on the day you arrive at your new safe haven location.

**Authorized Locations:** Anywhere in the 50 United States, District of Columbia, U.S. territories, U.S. possessions, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

**Tourist Visa Extensions:** Families in KMC on 90-day tourist visas are encouraged to immediately file petitions with local German authorities to extend their status. This is specifically to allow families with DOWEA students to complete the remainder of the school year in KMC. The Joint Staff and U.S. European Command will issue specific guidance to assist with filing petitions efficiently.

**Support:** Military OneSource is available 24/7 for counseling, relocation support, and referrals: [militaryonesource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil) or 1-800-342-9647.

## COMMUNITY & SUPPORT RESOURCES

- **Mental Health:** Mental Health & MFLC: Transitioning brings real anxiety — for adults and children alike. Our Military and Family Life Counselors are available and ready to help your family process these changes. Please do not hesitate to reach out.
- **Town Hall:** Town Hall: Join us for a TF 51/5 Family Town Hall on [Date/Time] via Microsoft Teams to discuss these transitions with the command team and connect with other Bahrain cohort families.

## IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

DATE	EVENT / DEADLINE
15 May 2026	DOWEA school decision - Bahrain school enrollment for next year
30 June 2026	KMC Germany no longer approved as safe haven - families must transition by this date
9 Sept 2026	180-day threshold — JTR default: per diem transitions to BAH; USW guidance anticipated



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## NEXT STEPS: START THE CONVERSATION

Before making any formal declarations, speak with your Service Member this week. They have the most current information regarding their next assignment, whether they are remaining with TF 51/5 or PCS'ing early, and what operational factors may affect their availability.

Identifying a preferred path forward is not about locking yourself into a "Plan B" — it is about choosing the option that genuinely sets your family up for success, whether that means staying closer to family for support, getting children enrolled in a stable school district, or positioning yourself for your next duty station ahead of the transition.

## CLOSING

We recognize that the Safe Haven designation has felt like a moving target, and that each administrative change adds a layer of uncertainty. Our commitment is straightforward: we will keep you informed with accurate, timely guidance and support your family through every step of this transition.

This newsletter does not mandate a specific course of action. It is intended to ensure you have the information necessary to make a decision that reflects your family's priorities, your service member's assignment, and the options available under current policy. We intend to make these moves as seamless as possible, and we are with you every step of the way.

Semper Fidelis,

**Major General Stephen Lightfoot**

*Commanding General, Naval Amphibious Force, Task Force 51 / 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade*