

What to think about when you PCS

By Captain Daniel R. Wilmoth, JA

Summer is nearly here, and what that means for many military families is a new duty station following a long move and PCS. For some Servicemembers and their family, this is their tenth PCS, and they are old pros. For some, it could be their last, and settling down can be seen as the light at the end of the tunnel. Then for many, this could be the first of many PCS moves to take place in a long military career.

Pat Conroy, a military brat himself, describes this process in his autobiographical novel *The Great Santini*. In one of the opening scenes, the family station wagon is loaded up with family, pets, and as many boxes as possible. As the car ride progresses, each member discusses their favorite duty station and the six month stay at grandma's house. Tears are shed, arguments transpire, and the wife and mother just is happy to be living in the South again. In the next scene, the military moving company delivers the household goods. Yes, after a one to three year stay at a place you have called home, the Servicemember, the spouse, and the children are going to pack up the household goods and set out for their new home. This can be a daunting task for the single Servicemember, much less one with a spouse and three kids, and there are many things to remember.

With a routine summer PCS, the normal end to an apartment or home lease usually coincides with that PCS. However, many times the end of a lease term extends past the PCS date. Luckily, the Servicemember and family members are protected by the SCRA (Servicemembers Civil Relief Act). The SCRA will allow the Servicemember to terminate the lease without penalty because of the PCS. It is important to note that the landlord should be given thirty days notice, and that notice should be in writing. As with the end of any lease term, a move out inspection should be completed with the landlord and tenant, and the tenant should have in writing any defects observed from that inspection.

Along with the termination of the lease, the move is a large part of the PCS. Servicemembers have the option of completing the move themselves, commonly called a DITY move, or they can have the military move them with one of the moving companies contracted through the Department of Defense. With a DITY move (Do It Yourself Move), the most important thing to remember is to have empty and full weight tickets for the moving truck or van. Also, the Servicemember should check with the transportation office to receive updated rates on what lodging and gas costs will be reimbursed. If a contracted company is to move the family, make sure the Servicemember or spouse is there to supervise the packing and loading of boxes and other items. They need to inspect the contract and list of items, and make sure everything corresponds to what was loaded into the truck. Second, when the items arrive, the original contract should be used to compare what was unloaded from the truck. Specific notes should be made for boxes or items that did not arrive. Lastly, if items were damaged or never

arrived, go to the installation's claim office as soon as possible. This is because there is a strict time limit one has to file a claim. It is important to note that you may also file a claim with the company that delivered the goods.