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Office of Defense Trade Controls Customer Satisfaction Report



Commitment to Our Customers

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Office of Defense Trade Controls Customer Satisfaction Report



Background

The Office of Defense Trade Controls (DTC) and its modern day predecessors have administered control of international arms traffic since the 1930's. Our experience suggests that—even while dealing with resource constraints and reductions—services might be improved by determining what industry considers to be critical, promoting innovation in streamlining processes and restructuring resource allocations, and evaluating performance with realistic goals and standards.

Based on public sector response and some introspection, DTC developed the attached Customer Service Plan. It was officially published in a 1994 report by the National Performance Review, "Putting Customers First: Standards for Servicing the American People," and have since been otherwise widely disseminated. Most recently, in the May 1996 issue of Defense Trade News and Export Policy Bulletin ("DTN"), we requested a private sector appraisal of the standards and DTC's performance in relation to them. Our analysis of the findings can be found below.

The Public Response and Perception

- *The DTC Customer Service Plan reflects the issue that seem to matter to private industry customers.* Some 85 percent of respondents to the Survey rated Customer Service Plan standards within the "good" to "excellent" range. Very few people suggested there were any issues that had not been addressed in the Plan, but a number, in this connection, expressed concern about slow response times to industry queries.

- *DTC meets most of its customer service standards most of the time.* About 88 percent of the respondents said DTC meets its published

customer standards; 58 percent felt DTC performance was definitively positive in this regard. Those who felt DTC fails to meet the threshold of its standards most often complained of inattentiveness to their needs or questions (e.g., failure to provide sufficient details or to return telephone calls).

- *DTC is strong in technical competence.* More than 98 percent of the Survey responses said DTC personnel assisting the public are knowledgeable. While some unevenness in expertise was noted, some 91 percent of the respondents rated DTC employees as "very knowledgeable" or "knowledgeable."

- *DTC substantive functions are generally performed in a timely manner.* About 82 percent of the respondents report that DTC performed services related to its core functions (i.e., registration, licensing, compliance and enforcement) in a timely manner. Almost 12 percent said such services were completed "sooner than expected." Slow response to telephone calls and "bureaucratic obstacles" were identified as concerns.

- *DTC generally handles the public courteously.* Some 95 percent of the respondents described the business manner of DTC personnel as courteous and professional. Some concern was expressed about the demeanor of a very limited number of DTC officers and difficulties experienced in speaking directly to a given individual by telephone.

- *Public perception of DTC customer service ranks favorably in comparison with that of other government offices.* Approximately 70 percent of respondents rated DTC customer service as "better" than that of other government agencies. Over 80 percent considered DTC customer service to be at least equal to service

offered by other agencies. Negative comments varied considerably, ranging from the desire for more public outreach, to the need for more telephonic accessibility to DTC personnel, to concerns about regulation of defense trade.

Other Public Input

DTC officials also receive a considerable amount of other comment about office performance in the area of customer service. This is largely in the form of letters and facsimile messages, meetings with industry (one-on-one and industry association events), telephonic conversations, and feedback to our participation in public outreach fora. This information--less formal than the Survey results and often focussing on individual DTC personnel rather than overall office operations--is also given our keen attention. In general, the substance seem to support the Survey findings.

Next Steps for DTC

DTC will review its Customer Service Plan in an effort to ensure its relevancy to changing customer requirements and will publish those standards of performance.

An immediate priority in response to the Survey must be improvement of timely communication with the private sector. To this end, during the first quarter of Fiscal Year 1997, DTC plans to enhance its telephone system and establish an interactive "Web" site on the Internet.

In July 1996, DTC received a letter from a small business that noted "At a time when many of our government agencies are criticized for lack of efficiency and/or poor service, your staff stands tall as an example of what every agency should be." With new service standards and improved performance, DTC will seek to engender that sentiment among all its customers. ♦

DTC's Customer Service Plan

Commitment to Our Customers

In accordance with the Administration's National Performance Review, all Federal agencies that provide significant services directly to the public are required to publish a customer service plan.

The plan below explains DTC's mission, services DTC provides, and DTC's commitment to quality. As a part of our continuing effort to provide quality service, DTC will periodically survey the community it serves.

Our Mission

The Office of Defense Trade Controls, in accordance with Sections 38-40 of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA or 22 U.S.C. 2778) and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), controls the permanent and temporary export and temporary import of defense articles and defense services by taking final action on license applications and other requests for approval for defense trade exports and retransfers, and handling matters related to defense trade compliance, enforcement and reporting.

Service to Customers

In order to promote world peace, further U.S. foreign policy and national security interests, and facilitate legitimate export of commodities and services covered by the U.S. Munitions List and to facilitate the best customer service possible DTC is committed to:

- Providing timely, professional, knowledgeable, and courteous service to customers seeking guidance on registration, making applications for a defense export license or other approvals, requesting the status of specific licensing cases, or seeking guidance regarding compliance with export law and regulations.
- Taking initial action on all license applications (approve, disapprove, return without action, or coordinate with other offices) within 10 working days of receipt.
- Informing each registered individual and company with timely information on the status of their license application. For persons who do not have electronic access to the DTC (system) timely telephone responses are provided. Telephone inquiries are responded to by a responsible officer within 24 hours of receipt.
- Providing timely and authoritative guidance to the U.S. defense industry regarding export policies, procedures, and practices, based on interpretation of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) and other pertinent laws, national interests, and multinational agreements or arrangements. This includes the presentation of and participation in organized seminars, in house training, and other public outreach efforts, such as the *Defense Trade News*.
- Enhancing automated data processing to facilitate the electronic handling of requests for licenses and other approvals and to increase responsiveness to U.S. government requests for assistance.
- Ensuring proper compliance with U.S. regulations, effective investigative and prosecutorial enforcement actions, as well as administrative procedural follow-up against violators of the AECA and the ITAR.
- Surveying customer satisfaction periodically to solicit suggestions for improving DTC services.

Commitment to Quality

The Office of Defense Trade Controls recognizes its responsibility to the American public and other governmental offices to provide the finest service possible at all times. As part of DTC's quest for improvement, the office uses an analytical approach, with statistical methods and other problemsolving tools, to accomplish its licensing and compliance missions.

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