

VOLUME 16: “DEFINITIONS”**SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES**

Changes are identified in this table and also denoted by [blue font](#).

Substantive revisions are denoted by an asterisk (*) symbol preceding the section, paragraph, table, or figure that includes the revision.

Unless otherwise noted, chapters referenced are contained in this volume.

Hyperlinks are denoted by [***bold, italic, blue, and underlined font***](#).

The previous version dated [October 2018](#) is archived.

PARAGRAPH	EXPLANATION OF CHANGE/REVISION	PURPOSE
Administrative Wage Garnishment	Expanded definition to clarify for readers.	Revision

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DEFINITIONS

1.0 General

The following list defines significant terms related to debt management and debt collection.

2.0 List of Definitions

Accounts Receivable Office (ARO)

The ARO is the office responsible for recording and reporting receivables and may also be the office responsible for debt collection.

*Administrative Wage Garnishment (AWG)

AWG is a process whereby a non-federal employer is ordered by the Department of Treasury (Treasury) to withhold amounts from an employee's wages in order to collect a federal non-tax debt owed to a federal agency, such as DoD.

Cross-Servicing Program

The Cross-Servicing Program is the Treasury's consolidated debt collection program in which the Treasury uses a variety of tools to collect a debt, such as demand letters, telephone calls, the Treasury Offset Program (TOP), AWG, and credit bureau reporting.

Debt

A. As defined in Title 31, United States Code, section 3701, debt is an amount of funds or property that an appropriate official of the Federal Government has determined to be due the U.S. Government from a person, organization, or entity other than another federal agency that the Government is entitled to receive immediately. Debts include, but are not limited to: insured or guaranteed loans and amounts due from fees, leases, rents, royalties, services, sales of real or personal property, overpayments, financial obligations from foreign military sales purchasers, penalties, damages, interest, fines, and forfeitures.

B. Debt in this context does not include tax debts, amounts due a nonappropriated fund instrumentality (unless specifically included in the DoD Financial Management Regulation), delays in processing employee-elected coverage, or a change in coverage under federal benefits programs if processing delays did not exceed 2 monthly or 4 biweekly pay periods.

Debt and Claims Management Office (DCMO)

The DCMO offers debt management and collection assistance for delinquent debts owed to the DoD by individual debtors who are former DoD employees that are no longer paid by the DoD.

Debt Collection Office (DCO)

DCO refers to the office or individuals at the DoD Component level that are primarily responsible for debt establishment and collection for the Component. DCOs that manage the debt collection for the Component are typically located in the following areas: AROs, military and civilian payroll offices (located both within and outside of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)), Debt Management Office (DMO), DCMO, contracting offices, disbursing offices, or the Foreign DMO.

Debt Compromise

Debt compromise is an agreement between the DoD and the debtor to accept less than the full amount of an outstanding debt in full satisfaction of the entire amount of the debt. A debt compromise is final and conclusive unless obtained by fraud, misrepresentation, presentation of a false claim, or mutual misstatement of fact.

Debt Management Office (DMO)

The DMO is the DFAS office that services referred vendor/contractor debts.

Debt Referring Office

The Debt Referring Office is the office responsible for referring contractor, assignee, and business entity debt to the DMO or the office responsible for referring individual out-of-service debt to the DCMO. The Debt Referring Office could include, but is not limited to: AROs, DCOs, accounting offices, military pay offices, vendor pay offices, contracting offices, and disbursing offices.

Delinquent Debt

A delinquent debt is a debt that has not been paid by the due date specified in the written demand for payment (i.e., invoice, debt notification letter, or applicable agreement or instrument (including a post-delinquency payment agreement)).

Erroneous Payment

An erroneous payment is a payment that was not legal and proper when made or is not in compliance with applicable laws or regulations ([*Title 32, Code of Federal Regulations, section 284.3*](#)). Refer to Volume 5, Chapters 5 and 6 for information on pecuniary liability. For purposes of DoD debt collection, examples of erroneous payments include:

- A. An improper overpayment to a payee;
- B. Two or more payments to a payee for the same entitlement (i.e., duplicate payment)

- C. A payment to the wrong payee;
- D. A U.S. Treasury check issue overdraft (in some cases);
- E. A shortage caused by negotiation of both an original and a substitute Treasury check;
- F. Payment based on fraudulent, forged, or altered documents; and
- G. A payment made in violation of law or regulation.

Legally Enforceable Debt

A debt is legally enforceable if the DCO has made a final determination that the debt is valid and there are no legal bars to collection action. If the debt is the subject of a pending administrative review process required by statute or regulation, and collection action during the review process is prohibited, then the debt is not considered legally enforceable for purposes of mandatory referral to the Treasury.

Long-Term Loans and Credits

Long-term loans and credits include any indebtedness to the DoD in which the original payment terms provide for payment within a period of time exceeding one year after delivery or performance.

Offset

An offset is the withholding of the entire amount or a portion of a payment to a payee and applying the amount withheld to liquidate the payee's debt. There are several methods used to perform an offset.

A. Administrative offset is the withholding of any funds payable by the United States to, or held by the United States for, a person to satisfy a debt.

B. Salary offset is limited to the withholding from pay and allowances. Salary offset is accomplished by installment deduction(s) at officially established pay intervals from the current pay of the individual.

C. Centralized offset is done by the Treasury and is administered through TOP. Centralized offset occurs when Treasury withholds part or all of a debtor's federal payments to satisfy the debtor's delinquent debt owed to the Government.

D. Non-centralized offset is also the withholding of a debtor's federal payments, but it is done internally by federal agencies on a case-by-case basis.

Short-Term Loans and Credits

Short-term loans and credits are any debts in which the original payment terms provide for payment between 90 days up to, and including, one year after delivery or performance. Foreign Military Sales transactions, which provide for payment 120 days after delivery or performance, will be classified as short-term credit sales.

Suspension of Collection Action

Suspension of a collection action is a determination to cease collection action temporarily with the intent to initiate collection action at a later date.

Termination of Collection Action

Termination of collection action is a determination to cease active debt collection. Passive debt collection efforts, such as Treasury cross-servicing, may resume following termination of collection activity.

Treasury Offset Program (TOP)

TOP is a program that allows agencies to submit delinquent, valid, and legally enforceable debts to the Bureau of the Fiscal Service for collection via offset of all eligible payments the debtor may receive from the Government.