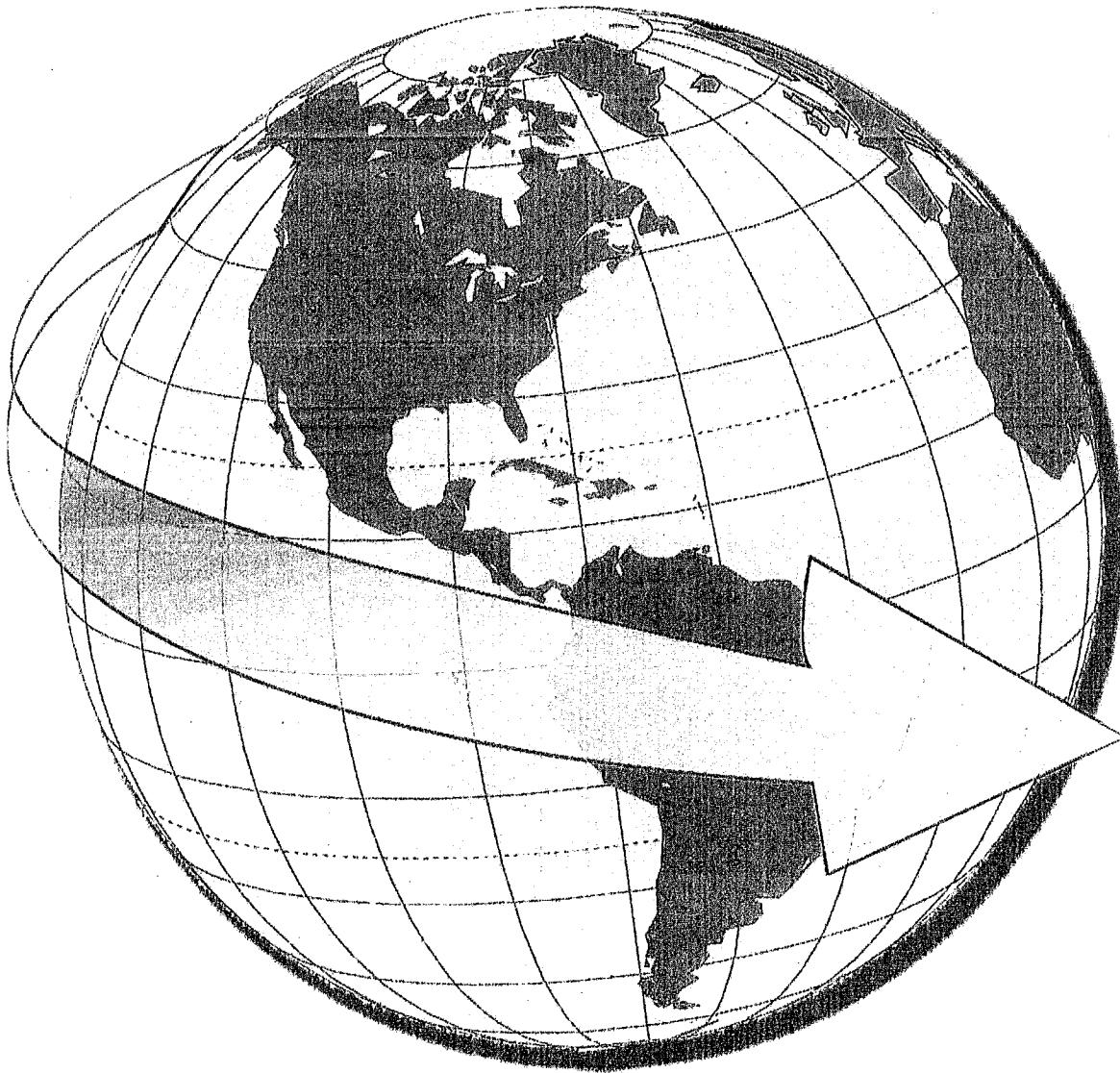


Naval Criminal Investigative Service Mobility Survey



Bulletin Special Edition
An SPG-Communications Directorate Collaboration

September 1999

From the Director: _____

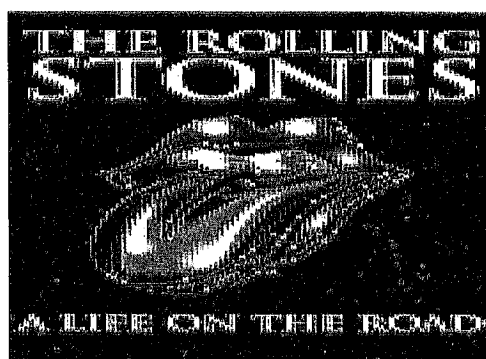
This Special Edition of the Bulletin reports the Mobility Survey Results **to date**. For those of you who haven't yet had the opportunity to fill out the survey and submit your suggestions, there is a survey form included with this Special Edition of *The Bulletin*. I **strongly** encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to affect the future of NCIS. We have not made any policy decisions yet, and we won't until you've had ample time to respond and we have considered the responses.

I believe that the mobility policy revision we're contemplating is one of the top two issues I'll deal with in my tenure as your Director. I don't think I can overstate the impact that a sound mobility policy will have on the future of NCIS, because it not only affects you, your career, and your family in a profound way, but it also affects future recruiting and retention. That's why I felt each of you should be able to provide input and have that input considered as a major factor in devising potential revisions to the NCIS mobility policy.

I also believe that this isn't a one-way street. You want feedback, and you should have it. Here it is. I think you'll find the results as interesting as I did.

David L. Brant

"You can't always get what you want..."



*"But if you try sometimes, you just might find
You'll get what you need."*

Background & Methodology

In July 1999, Director Brant directed the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) to undertake a comprehensive review of the NCIS Special Agent (SA) mobility strategy. He challenged the SPG to devise a mobility strategy that optimizes NCIS mission accomplishment and agent morale.

The SPG assigned the review to three graduate students hired by NCIS for the summer as management analysts. Trained in public policy analysis, statistics, and telecommunications system design, these analysts developed a review methodology designed to gather and analyze current NCIS policy, information from agents, managers, and other law enforcement agencies. As part of the review, the SPG decided it was important to elicit candid input from agents using a survey and "focus groups," that is, small group discussions focused on the issue of mobility.

The survey was designed to gather basic demographic information about respondents, as well as, preferences and attitudes with respect to geographic/office assignments and transfer policy. The survey offered agents the opportunity to write in comments and suggestions.

The survey was provided to ADs and SACs, who were asked to disseminate the surveys to all agents under their purview. The DAB Chair assisted the SPG by checking with field DAB representatives to ensure surveys were being received in the field. Surveys received by the deadline date were compiled and analyzed.

The SPG selected a variety of agents for focus groups to ensure that agents of different

ages, gender, marital status, and assignment history participated. Agents who appeared particularly opinionated and interested in the review, or offered intriguing or well thought out suggestions on their surveys were also consulted. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with agents at Headquarters and the DC Field Office.

Due to convenient timing of FCI training, feedback from Mayport and Gulf Coast agents was also gathered during a group interview at Headquarters. Teleconferences were held with agents at Kaneohe Bay, Pearl Harbor, and Naples. NCIS executives were questioned to gather their opinions on agency needs, past problems, and lessons learned.

Agents in the NCIS Career Services Department (Code 25) were consulted regularly

"It would be really nice to get feedback on this survey.... What is the point of completing surveys if the results are never revealed or discussed?"

Northwest Field Office

regarding policy issues, structural issues, historical data,

transfer requirements, and administration of the current mobility program.

Information gathered in these forums was critical to understanding readiness imperatives and concerns of the NCIS agent corps. Employees were very receptive to the focus group concept and provided valuable information to the SPG.

The Director and Executive Planning Group were briefed on the survey and focus group results on August 25, 1999. Director Brant directed that the survey results summary be disseminated to the field via a Special Edition of the Bulletin and agents be offered one more opportunity to forward constructive comments, feedback and suggestions to the SPG and DAB Chair.

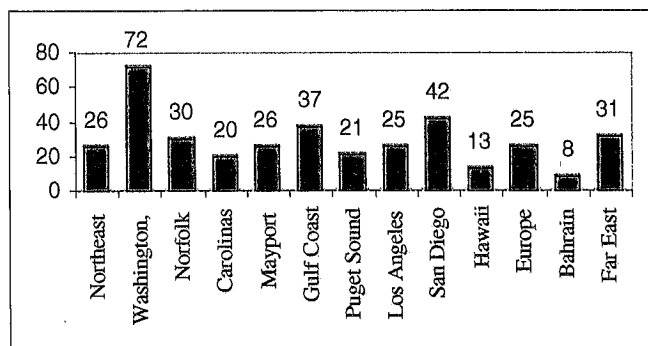
Major Findings

High Response Rate = High Interest

Using survey response rate as an indicator of agent interest in and concern regarding mobility, it can be surmised that the NCIS mobility strategy and policy are important to the agent corps.

Typically, response rate for surveys is very low, often in the single digits. Response to this survey was very high—45% (378 respondents from a total civilian agent population of 829). This was despite some breakdown in some offices in dissemination of the surveys, annual leave, TAD assignments, and other impediments to efficient and effective distribution of the survey.

Survey Respondents by Field Office



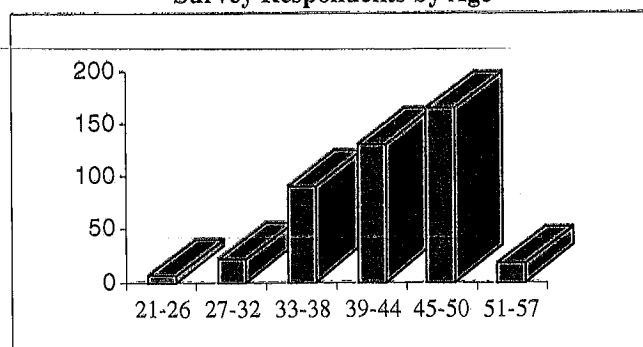
The SPG conducted a worldwide survey. Response rate was 45%.

Response Pool Reflected Agent Corps

Demographics of respondents reflected the actual demographic make up of the agent corps. No one segment of the agent corps was significantly more likely to respond than another.

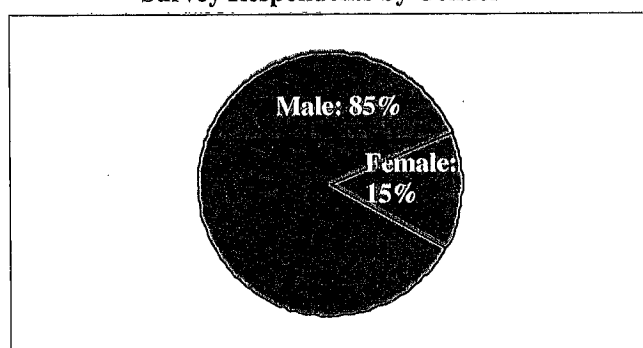
The age breakdown for respondents highlighted the maturity of the agent corps and suggests demographics—particularly new hiring and retirements over the next five years—will have a dramatic impact on NCIS readiness, billet availability and resulting mobility program.

Survey Respondents by Age

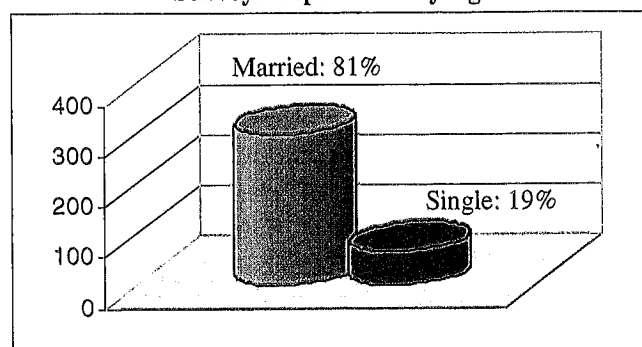


The Special Agent corps is nearing retirement age. [Note: not all respondents answered every question, thus totals may not match.]

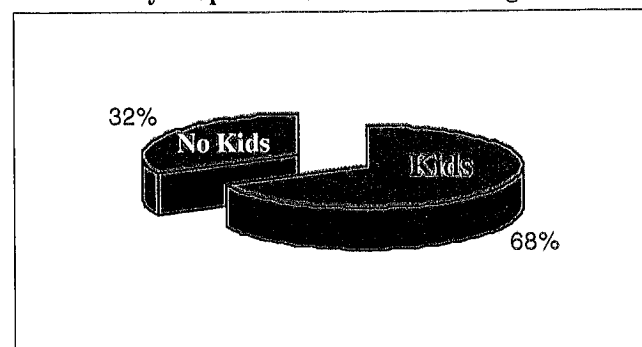
Survey Respondents by Gender



Survey Respondents by Age



Survey Respondents with Children Aged 0-18



Special Agent attrition is rising. Most of the increase is due to an increase in the rate of retirements. The SPG projects total Special Agent attrition for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, will equal or exceed 60 agents. (Note: updated data depicted in the table below bears out this prediction first made in early August.)

NCIS Agent Attrition

Fiscal Year	Total Attrition	Retirements	Other
1997	42	16	26
1998	48	16	32
1999	60	27	33

No "Interest Groups"

Interestingly, the rank order of responses to questions did not change significantly when broken out by demographic groupings. In other words, whether agents were younger or older, male or female, married or single did not matter. No "interest groups" based on age, seniority, gender, marital status or office of assignment surfaced in the survey. This indicates that popular responses, sentiments and opinions expressed in the survey are consistently and widely held throughout the agent corps.

Also of interest, a significant number of agents responding from the most desirable offices favored policy that would serve as a catalyst for mobility into and out of desirable offices. Likewise, a significant number of agents in the least desirable offices favored policy that would permit agents to "home-stead" in those offices.

Agent Corps is Experienced

The average respondent has served almost 13 years with NCIS and has moved three times during his or her career with NCIS.

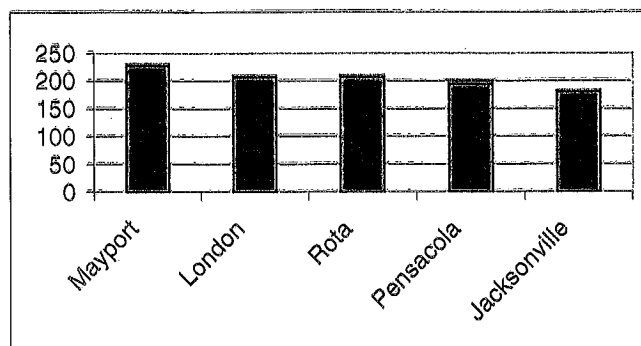
Southeast "Tops" INCONUS

Three offices in Florida were rated most desirable by respondents—Mayport,

Pensacola, and Jacksonville. Overall, offices in the southeastern U.S. were rated more desirable than offices anywhere else INCONUS. Survey comments and focus groups seemed to indicate that perceived low cost of living in the southeastern U.S. is a major factor in the desirability of assignments to the southeastern United States. Agents commented frequently that Florida was desirable due to cost of living and that a fair mobility program should ensure all agents have an opportunity to serve some portion of their career in a low cost area.

Two overseas offices made the top five list—London, England and Rota, Spain.

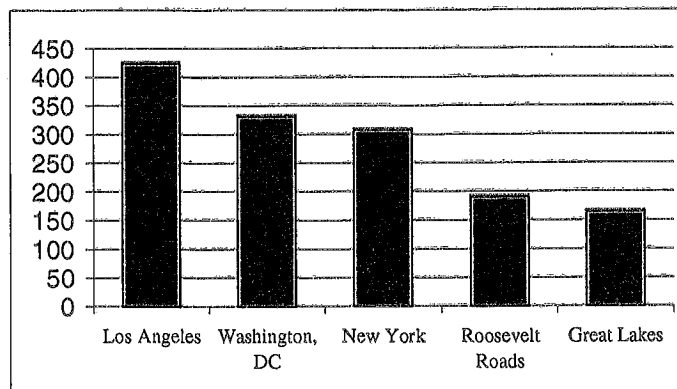
Most-Desired Offices



LA, DC, NY at the Bottom INCONUS

The LA Field Office in Uplands, California, the District of Columbia (Headquarters and DCWA) and New York topped the list when respondents rated least desirable offices. Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico and the NCISRA Great Lakes ranked fourth and fifth.

Least-Desired Offices



Respondents and focus group participants cited numerous reasons for the low popularity of LA, DC, and New York. Most frequently cited were cost of living and commute times. Most of the reasons cited would fit under a broad category of "quality of life" concerns.

We Love and Hate DC

Curiously, Washington DC, while rated among the least desirable offices by most agents, was also rated among the most desirable office locations by a high proportion of agents. Combining the favorability rankings given to Headquarters and DCWA, DC ranked number eleven among most desirable offices. A sizable proportion of agents currently assigned to the DC Metro area would like to remain in DC. Agents who desire DC cited a number of factors including exciting/challenging office/duty, quality of life, quality of schools, family attachments to the area, etc.

"Mobility is one of the major benefits of NCIS. There are very few reasons I wouldn't move."

This corps-wide "love-hate" sentiment regarding DC suggests that some type of special designation should be developed for Headquarters and DCWA as "hard-to-fill" offices which would allow agents to stay in place and be exempt from mobility requirements. This would allow for NCISHQ to effectively staff these locations with agents who desire to live and serve in the DC Metro area, while lessening the number of DC billets open to agents returning from overseas duty. This strategy could do a lot to address "trading down" anxiety among agents contemplating overseas transfers.

Why Volunteer?

Agents overwhelmingly responded that the factor motivating them to volunteer to

PCS transfer to another location is the opportunity for exciting, challenging new assignments. Professional development and management opportunities, respectively, ranked second and third as motivating incentives.

Incentives to PCS

1	Exciting, Challenging Office/Duty
2	Professional Development
3	Upward Mobility/Management Opportunity

Money, opportunity to travel, opportunity to experience a new culture, exemption from future transfers, and costly current locations trailed as motivating factors. The two factors least likely to serve as incentives were boredom at current location and the opportunity to learn a new language. The SPG concluded that agent desire for career development and advancement is a top concern motivating volunteers.

Why I Don't Volunteer

When asked what factors make agents reluctant to volunteer for PCS transfer to another location, quality of life ranked number one, followed by "trading down" risk, and schools. Cost of living, spouse's career, location of vacancy, and "no incentive to move" were ranked fourth through seventh, respectively.

"A lot of agents won't volunteer [for OCONUS transfer] because they know they could easily get stuck in an undesirable office upon return."

Agent in Gulf Coast Field Office

The concerns least likely to make agents reluctant to volunteer were lack of quality medical care, stress of moving, professional development, current office/duties are more exciting, weather, culture shock, and fear of the unknown.

"I feel the major problem about transferring overseas is that you really have no choice in where you return to."

- Agent in the Northwest Field Office

Trading Down Risk. A very high number of respondents cited "trading down" risk as a powerful disincentive. This concern of agents was underscored in focus groups.

The SPG tabulated the reassignments of street agents returning to CONUS from overseas assignment and verified that 57% of agents returning to CONUS last year were assigned to either DC or Los Angeles, the two least desirable offices according to the survey.

FY	Total OCONUS Moves	DC		LA	
1996	42	16	38%	3	7%
1997	17	7	41%	1	6%
1998	39	14	36%	3	8%
1999	40	21	52%	2	5%

This better than 50-50 chance of assignment to DC or LA clearly discourages agents who otherwise desire to compete for overseas assignments.

Follow-On Assignments. Several survey respondents and participants in focus groups suggested consideration be given to offering some sort of guarantee of follow-on assignment to bidders on overseas vacancies. SPG coordination with Code 25 indicates a blanket policy of offering guarantees would quickly create blockages in the transfer system and would risk overstaffing in some offices, exacerbating readiness problems in others. Also, from a practical stand point, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to accu-

rately project most INCONUS vacancies three years out, year after year.

What I Consider When I Volunteer

When asked what factors agents consider most important when they choose to volunteer for certain assignments they ranked quality of life, schools for children, and cost of living as the most important factors, followed by professional development, spouse's career, and location of duty station.

Exciting office duties, availability of quality medical care, crime rate and weather were ranked as the least important factors.

Several respondents and participants in focus groups asserted NCIS needs to do more for families, or help agents "sell" the benefits of mobility to families.

It appears from focus group discussions that many agents are unaware of improvements made at several overseas locations (new DOD school in Guam, routine access

to Navy medical care in Roosevelt Roads, base housing in Yokosuka, new base in Naples).

Several agents suggested improved communication of accurate, up-to-date information about other assignments would increase agent propensity to volunteer. Others noted that spouses are an important target audience.

A number of you suggested exploiting the Internet as a communications medium that can reach most spouses.

"I love moving with NCIS. It keeps things interesting. It's selling a move to the family that's tough!"

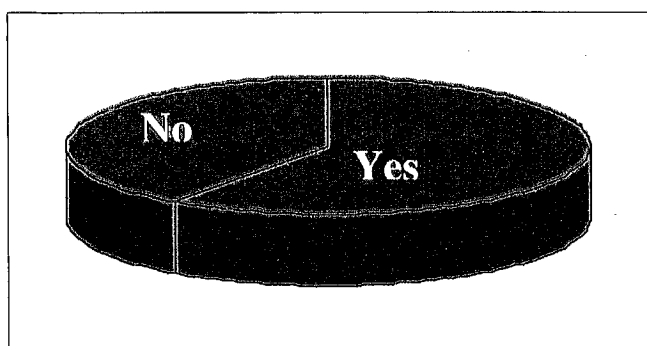
- Agent in the European Field Office

Who Must Go

Asked who should be compelled to transfer when there aren't enough volunteers, agents overwhelmingly supported compelling agents with the greatest time in place who have never PCS'd. The needs of the service—"match" of the agent to the assignment—was listed as the second most important factor in determining who should be selected to transfer should compelled moves become necessary.

TDY Exemption

Agents were split 60-40 on whether it would be a good idea to offer a mobility exemption for TDY credit.

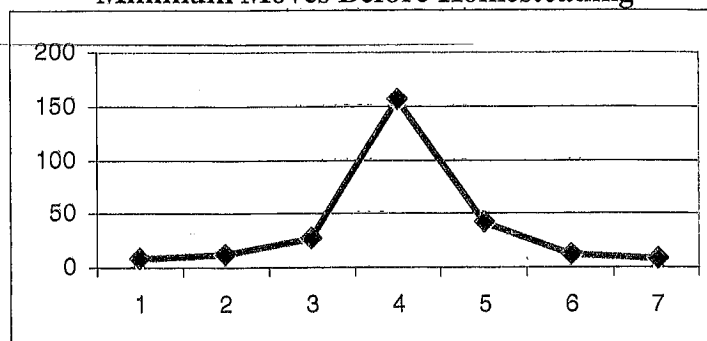


Would you be in favor of having the option to earn and exercise a one-year exemption from the mobility agreement by serving TDY overseas for 45 cumulative days or more during a calendar year?

Move Credit Exemption (8-year Exemption)

Agents were asked to consider a revised mobility policy that would allow agents to settle down, or homestead, in select PCS locations after completing several PCS moves. Under these circumstances, we asked them to suggest the minimum number of moves required before a homesteading exemption should be permitted." Forty-one percent of agents chose four PCS moves, while 29 percent of agents believed homesteading was a bad idea. Forty agents wrote in 1, 2, or 3 on

Minimum Moves Before Homesteading



A majority of special agents surveyed favored homesteading.

their survey. Forty selected five moves as the minimum necessary to earn an exemption.

This concept was the topic of considerable discussion in focus groups and is being seriously studied by the SPG.

Summary

The mobility survey elicited useful data and constructive suggestions that have shaped subsequent SPG examination of mobility strategy and policy options. A preliminary strategy proposed on August 25, 1999, was grounded in suggestions from the field and constrained only by critical readiness concerns, hiring and attrition projections, and budget assumptions and projections. This survey and the follow on focus groups were devised to facilitate a dialogue with the agent corps.

Your suggestions are important to the development of a mobility strategy that optimizes NCIS mission accomplishment and agent morale. **It is not too late to participate.** A copy of the original survey is attached for those individuals who didn't have an opportunity to respond to the initial survey. Please provide all completed surveys and comments by 15 October to D. Butler, M. Hefferon, D. Winslow, or S. Zimmer at surveys@ncis.navy.mil or call the SPG at 202-433-9000, or FAX 202-433-9004.

Special Agent Mobility Survey

This survey is being administered to include your feedback in a new NCIS mobility policy. We are only able to include your thoughts on agent mobility if you complete this form. Your responses will remain anonymous to the Strategic Planning Group.

Please fax this form by August 3 to the Strategic Planning Group at 202-433-9004.

Circle one.

Gender:	Male	Female				
Marital Status:	Single	Married				
Age (circle one):	21-26	27-32	33-38	39-44	45-50	51-57
Do you have children ages 0-18:	Yes	No				

Current Field Office: _____

How many years have you been an NCIS agent? _____

How many PCS moves have you made as an NCIS agent? _____

List your 4 most desirable duty station locations (#1 being the most desirable office). Be specific (i.e. NCISRA Gulfport, MS rather than Gulf Coast Field Office).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

List your 4 least desirable duty stations (#1 being the least desirable office). Again, be specific.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Rank the factors that would be incentives to motivate you to volunteer for PCS transfer to another location (#1 being the most important factor).

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ Professional Development | _____ Money (e.g., overseas allowances) |
| _____ Upward mobility/Mgmt. opportunity | _____ Exemption from future transfers |
| _____ Exciting, challenging office/duty assignment | _____ Bored at current location |
| _____ Opportunity to experience a new culture | _____ Current location is costly |
| _____ Opportunity to travel | _____ Opportunity to learn a new language |
| _____ Other (Please List) _____ | |

Rank the factors that make you reluctant to volunteer for PCS transfer to another location (#1 being the most important factor).

- | | |
|---|---|
| _____ Spouse's career | _____ Schools for your children |
| _____ Cost of living | _____ Current office/duties more exciting |
| _____ Weather | _____ Stress of moving |
| _____ Professional Development | _____ Quality of life |
| _____ Fear of the unknown | _____ No incentive to move |
| _____ Lack of quality medical care | _____ Culture shock/language barriers |
| _____ Location of vacancy (e.g., hardships, few modern amenities, far from family, etc.) | |
| _____ "Trading Down" Risk (i.e., possibility or likelihood of limited vacancies INCONUS at conclusion of overseas assignment) | |
| _____ Other (Please List) _____ | |

Rank the factors that are most important to you in choosing a new duty station (#1 being the most important factor).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse's career | <input type="checkbox"/> Schools for your children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of living | <input type="checkbox"/> Exciting office/duties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weather | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location of station/travel opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of quality medical care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Crime rate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please List) _____ | |

When it becomes necessary to invoke the mobility agreement and compel a transfer, rank the factors that should be important in determining who is selected to transfer (#1 being the most important factor).

- ☐ Professional development needs of agents
- ☐ Compel agents who have never PCS'd starting with those with the greatest time-in-place
- ☐ Compel agents who have never PCS'd, starting with the most junior
- ☐ Compel agents who have never PCS'd, starting with the most senior
- ☐ Compel agents in the most desirable locations who have been in place five years or more, starting with the most junior
- ☐ Compel agents in the most desirable locations who have been in place five years or more, starting with the most senior
- ☐ The "match" of the agent to the assignment (i.e., language skills, professional reputation, performance history, judgement/discretion, adaptability, etc.)
- ☐ Other (Please List) _____

Would you be in favor of having the option to earn and exercise a one year exemption from the mobility agreement by serving TDY overseas on a special contingency for 45 cumulative days or more during a calendar year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If a revised mobility policy were to allow agents to settle down or "homestead" in select PCS locations after completing several PCS moves, what should be the minimum number of moves required of an agent before a homesteading exemption from the mobility agreement should be permitted?

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 more than 9 "Homesteading" a bad idea

Please add any comments you feel would be helpful regarding agent mobility policy. This is your chance to have a voice in the policy that will be directly affecting you. Additionally, you may contact us at surveys@ncis.navy.mil or call the SPG at 202-433-9017 to submit additional comments.

OPTIONAL: If you are interested in offering further information on your opinions regarding mobility, please include your name here. You may be contacted for additional information.

Name: _____