



Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

February 28, 2017

Southwest Airlines
P.O. Box 36647-1CR
Dallas, Texas 75235

Dear Southwest:

I just saw on your website that “Southwest offers military discounts to active military personnel and their families,” military ID required. By “military ID,” I assume you mean the Defense Department-issued “Common Access Card,” commonly referred to as a “CAC.” I am writing to you on behalf of the active duty officers in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), one of the seven federal uniformed services, along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, etc., all of whom carry Defense-issued CACs. Only the members of these seven services carry the CAC—not anyone else who works for the federal government.

These 6600 USPHS officers wear military uniforms, have military privileges such as commissary and exchange, receive their healthcare at military treatment facilities or through TRICARE, can retire after twenty years of service, and are paid according to military pay scales. They deploy with U.S. military personnel, as they did in 2014 and 2015 to Liberia to fight the deadly Ebola virus, and as almost 900 of them did to Iraq and Afghanistan.

They have existed as a uniformed service since 1889, and they deploy wherever there is a natural or manmade disaster with public health implications. Over 2000 PHS officers deployed to the Gulf Coast when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit there; over 1000 deployed to New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut when Superstorm Sandy wreaked its havoc. USPHS mental health teams deployed after the Newtown, CT, and Roseburg, OR, mass shootings. They are in Flint, MI, right now working on the lead-in-the-water problem.

In short, these officers are worthy of your military discount, for they are, in all important ways, the same as members of our military forces. The primary—indeed the only readily-identifiable—difference between PHS officers and Army officers is that PHS officers are not generally armed, being regarded under the Geneva Convention as non-combatants. This is the same designation that applies to medical personnel in the military services.

We believe that you would be setting up Southwest as the airline of choice for these highly-affluent individuals by extending your military discount to them. Turning them into loyal Southwest customers makes eminent financial sense for your airline. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need more information about this unique group of uniformed personal.

Sincerely,

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)
Executive Director