



# THE NUGGET

NEWSLETTER FOR THE ARMY PACIFIC REGION  
PACIFIC REGION CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OPERATIONS CENTER,  
FORT RICHARDSON, ALASKA

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## **DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

**Jeanne Scharch, Director**

### **Springing into Action**

Although the winter weather was mild, there are lots of changes occurring in the Pacific Region:

- staffing of new organizations
- implementing A-76 studies
- preparing for the transition under Transformation of Installation Management
- implementing automation initiatives in personnel processing

Obviously it is true that the only thing constant is CHANGE. .

So the CPOC staff is springing into action. The CPOC staff is dedicated to supporting both managers and employees by providing prompt and efficient processing of personnel actions. Implementation of the automation initiatives over the next few months will present some challenges since the DCPDS system will be unavailable during implementation of some of the centralization initiatives. We will keep you advised regarding when systems will be off-line and any deadlines that must be met.

Your cooperation by providing information regarding personnel issues (i.e. revised PDs, employees separating, etc.) as soon as you are aware of them will enable the CPOC staff to better manage the competing requirements and successfully meet the needs of both employees and managers.

Please use the Customer Feedback Surveys available on our website: <http://pacific-cpoc.ak.pac.army.mil> to help us spring into action.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Pacific Region workforce and look forward to getting to know our customers as well as this wonderful location.

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## [Status of 1% Retroactive Pay Increase](#)

The President has signed the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution for FY 2003. Among many other provisions, this legislation includes language that mandates a 1 percent retroactive pay increase for most white-collar civilian Federal employees. However, decisions will have to be made regarding how the additional 1 percent pay increase will be allocated. Those decisions will be reflected in an Executive order signed by the President. Once the Executive order has been signed, OPM will issue new salary tables and provide additional guidance to Federal agencies. The additional 1 percent pay increase will be retroactive to the first pay period in January for all affected employees.

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## [Pacific Region Implements Request for Personnel Action Direct Flow Process \(RPA Direct\) and Army Regional Tools \(ART\) Gatekeeper Checklists](#)

The Assistant G1 for Civilian Personnel Policy has mandated a change in a corporate business process and has directed the use of RPA Direct and Gatekeeper Checklists. The Pacific Region Civilian Human Resources (CHR) Board of Directors (BOD) has elected to implement this process effective **28 April 2003**.

The purpose of RPA Direct is to improve RPA fill time, relieve the Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers (CPACs) from processing RPAs, and allow them more time to build human resources partnering initiatives with management at the point of service.

The Army has adopted RPA Direct as a new corporate business process based on positive test results. All RPAs will flow through the management chain directly to the Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC). CPACs will continue to fulfill their CHR advisory responsibilities to management officials and provide advice prior to initiation of personnel actions.

Essential to the success of this change in corporate process is the use of the ART Gatekeeper Checklist function. This tool contains standard automated checklists used to help managers properly prepare a RPA and collect information required in processing the action.

As of **1 February 2003**, completion of the appropriate Gatekeeper checklists is **required** to be, and must be, submitted with RPAs.

The Training Management Division of the Civilian Personnel Operations Center Management Agency (CPOCMA) developed a 16-minute instructional ScreenCam that introduces and demonstrates the Gatekeeper tool. You may access this "How-To-Movie" by clicking "Gatekeeper" at

<http://www.cpoema.army.mil/howtomovies/index.htm>.

Additional assistance can be obtained from your servicing CPAC representative.

Recommend that all users become proficient with the overall use of ART menu items and reports. This will assist you in determining the status and progress of RPAs submitted for processing. A weekly review is highly recommended.

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## [RPA Direct Routing](#)

Effective Monday, 28 April 2003 all RPAs should be routed to the following CPOC Distribution Groupboxes:

XYZ-5AWARDS/COPD - All RPAs dealing with Awards  
XYZ-5IN\_BOX/COCD - For all actions other than Awards

All existing CPAC Distribution Groupboxes beginning with XYZ will not be used.

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## [Thrift Savings Plan \(TSP\) Catch-Up Contributions Update](#)

On 27 Nov 02 the President signed Public Law 107-304, which permits eligible Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) participants who are age 50 or older to make tax deferred "catch-up" contributions from their basic pay to their TSP accounts. These contributions are a supplement to the participants regular employee contributions and do not count against either their statutory contribution limits or the Internal Revenue Code's elective deferral limit.

Below is an article from Department of Army's most recent civilian personnel bulletin on TSP Catch-Up.

The Thrift Investment Board has released TSP Bulletin 03-4, Catch-up Contributions for TSP Participants Age 50 and Older. Catch-up contributions potentially provide participants over 50 an opportunity to make up for working years when 401(k)'s and similar savings plans, like the TSP, were not available. TSP catch-up contributions are made on a pre-tax basis and therefore may only be made through payroll deductions.

To be eligible to make TSP catch-up contributions an employee must be:

1. In a pay status
2. Contributing the allowable maximum to TSP
3. Age 50 years old in the year the catch-up contributions are made
4. Not in the 6-month non-contribution period following receipt of a financial hardship in-service withdrawal

Currently there are over 20,000 Army civilian employees who meet these eligibility requirements.

Catch-up contributions are not subject to the Internal Revenue Code's elective deferral limits (\$12,000 in 2003). However, catch-up contributions are limited each year as follows:

**Year Maximum Contribution**

2003 \$2,000  
2004 \$3,000  
2005 \$4,000  
2006 and thereafter \$5,000

(Catch-up contributions are not subject to the open season rules, and more than one election may be made in any given year, so long as the annual limit is not exceeded).

The Defense Finance and Accounting System and personnel systems must be adapted to allow for catch-up contributions to be withheld. TSP Bulletin 03-4 states the intention to implement the catch-up contributions program in July 2003 and the effective date as early as the first pay period in August. The implementation date for each Federal agency will, however, be dependent upon adaptation of payroll and personnel systems.

Employees who may want to participate in TSP catch-up contributions should begin now to plan for a short time period to have payroll deductions made during 2003 following announcement of an implementation date. For example, if the first pay period TSP catch-up contributions can be withheld is September 26, 2003, an employee would have seven pay periods for withholdings to meet the \$2,000 maximum contribution for 2003, about \$300 a pay period.

TSP bulletins may be viewed on the TSP web site at <http://www.tsp.gov/> under the section, Info for Agency Reps. The Army Benefits Center - Civilian (ABC-C) website <https://www.abc.army.mil/> will continue to be updated with the latest information about TSP catch-up contributions as it becomes available. Employees may also contact the ABC-C at 1-877-276-9287 (see the web site for outside of the continental United States toll free numbers).

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**Long Term Care Program's Open Season Initial Results Released**

Long Term Care Partners, LLC, have announced that 265,000 members of the "Federal Family" have applied for insurance under the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program, which was created by Congress in 2000 and is sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management.

When underwriting is complete on all Open Season applicants (by early spring), the program is expected to be the largest employer-sponsored long-term care insurance program in the country, with more than 215,000 enrollees.

To date, enrollees in the FLTCIP are nearly evenly split between two groups: active employees and members of the uniformed services and their spouses; and annuitants, their spouses and other qualified relatives. Approved applicants are 54 percent female and 46 percent male. The average age of an active civilian enrollee in the program is 51; the average age of an active uniformed services enrollee in the program is 45.

The average age of a civilian or Postal annuitant in the program is 65; the average age of a retired uniformed services enrollee in the program is 63.

Almost 70 percent of the group opted for one of four prepackaged plans. The most popular plan design was the Comprehensive 100 Plan with the automatic compound inflation option, offering a \$100 daily benefit amount, a three-year benefit period, and a 90-day waiting period. Overall, nearly 70 percent of the group chose the automatic compound inflation option, one of the highest take-up rates in the employer market.

The annualized premium for the FLTCIP is projected to be more than \$250 million, higher than most programs on a per-enrollee basis. This is largely attributable to three factors: no upper age limitation, a larger proportion of older enrollees (e.g., federal retirees) than most employer group programs, and success in promoting the selection of automatic inflation protection.

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**Fully Automated System For Classification (FASCLASS) Release 2.0**

The Policy and Program Development Division, Position Classification Team, announces that FASCLASS, release 2.0, was fully and successfully deployed on Saturday, February 22, 2003. Numerous new features were contained within this release such as:

- Access to Look-up Tables has been given to Public user role.
- New Delegated Classification Authority (DCA) Report.
- Civilian Personnel Office Identifier (CCPOID) field has been added to the Comp Level report.
- New role "Personnelist" has been added. Role is for all personnelists other than classifiers.
- Functional code field added to search interdisciplinary
- Link to the Position Description (PD) has been placed on all email messages.
- What's New menu button has been added. Users can see what is new in the application.
- Advance Search and Search have been merged.
- Checks occupational series before allowing the creation of interdisciplinary positions.
- Links to regional homepages on CPOC logos, found on FASCLASS homepage.
- Classifiers will have the ability to search for PDs by employee name.
- Results screens will default to display up to 100 records.
- Ability to search by sequence without entering a CCPOID.
- Leading "0" have been added to the search screen in the fields of series and grade.
- Review process for managers/CPAC.
- New Report Track PD, ability to keep track of the status of a PD.

- Ability to know that there are not PDs within an organization before you click to open the organization.
- Ability to search for 4 digit PD numbers using power search.
- Ability to link directly to Classification and Qualification standards.
- Display the users role, after their name and before their region on the light blue menu bar.
- Ability to have a list of all PDs within a Unit Identification Code (UIC)
- When searching for multi-text, system will default the duty score to descending order.
- Title of CPOC Classifier or DCA Manager is added to Classified By field on new PDs.
- Ability for host nation employees to obtain their own userids.

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### [FASCLASS Training Survey](#)

The requirement to complete a Training Survey for certain positions has been cancelled. Currently the system requires a survey for all positions at the grade 11 and above. A FASCLASS team (at DA) will begin removing the Training Survey from the application. It will take 4 to 6 weeks to finish the removal. In the meantime, the survey remains in the application, however, when the CPOC Classifiers create the PD for management and the requirement for the Training Survey appears, the Classifiers can send the survey to the DA, for completion.

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### [Crediting Service with a DoD or Coast Guard Non-Appropriated Fund Instrumentality for CSRS or FERS Immediate Retirement Under Public Law 107-107, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002](#)

Section 1132 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, Public Law 107-107, changed how service with a Department of Defense (DoD) or Coast Guard Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) Instrumentality is credited under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Section 1132 gives CSRS and FERS employees the opportunity to elect to credit DoD or Coast Guard NAF service for the sole purpose of establishing eligibility for immediate retirement benefits. More information is available through OPM Benefits Administration Letter 03-102 accessed at: <http://www.opm.gov/asd/htm/bal-1.htm>

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### [Cost-of-Living Adjustments \(for Annuity Payments\)](#)

Many people who receive monthly annuity payments from the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) did receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) effective December 1, 2002. They received the increase in their January 2, 2003, annuity payments. The maximum increase is 1.4% for both CSRS and FERS annuitants.

Annuitants who have been retired at least 1 year will receive the full COLA, or maximum increase. To get the full COLA, a retiree's annuity had to begin no later than December 31, 2001.

Retirees whose annuities began between January 1, 2002, and November 30, 2002, will receive a prorated COLA. They will receive one-twelfth of the applicable increase for each month they receive any annuity. The following tables show the prorated percentage increases according to the month in which the annuity began.

#### **CSRS and FERS COLA Proration Table**

| <b>Month Annuity Began</b> | <b>Amount of Percentage Increase</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| December 2001 or earlier   | 1.4%                                 |
| January 2002               | 1.3%                                 |
| February 2002              | 1.2%                                 |
| March 2002                 | 1.1%                                 |
| April 2002                 | 0.9%                                 |
| May 2002                   | 0.8%                                 |
| June 2002                  | 0.7%                                 |
| July 2002                  | 0.6%                                 |
| August 2002                | 0.5%                                 |
| September 2002             | 0.4%                                 |
| October 2002               | 0.2%                                 |
| November 2002              | 0.1%                                 |

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### [Army's Centralization of HR Databases Delayed](#)

Army's transformation from Human Resource databases distributed at seven CONUS sites to consolidated databases at one central site has been delayed. The centralization project, which was scheduled to begin on March 7, 2003, is being delayed due to the workload associated with processing the additional 1% pay adjustment recently signed by President Bush. The pay adjustment is retroactive to January 12, 2003. As soon as guidance is received and the pay tables are available, the pay adjustment will be processed along with corrections to those personnel actions affecting pay that have been processed since January 12, 2003. Upon completion of the pay processing, the centralization project will continue.

How Does Centralization Affect Managers?

**HISTORY:** Currently, Army civilian employee records have been maintained in ten separate, regional databases. Seven of

these databases have been maintained by the five Continental United States (CONUS) Civilian Personnel Operations Centers (CPOCs) and the remaining are maintained by the three Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) CPOCs.

**WHAT'S CHANGING?** All CONUS CPOC databases are being centralized into the Army Civilian Data Center located at Rock Island Arsenal, IL. That means that the CPOCs will no longer maintain individual personnel databases. Rather, they will access the central database at Rock Island to process their personnel actions. OCONUS CPOCs may centralize as early as July 2003.

**WHY THE CHANGE?** Army is consolidating many automated personnel processes to better support our customers. By having the database in one location we can more quickly and efficiently update the automated systems we use.

**IMPACT ON MANAGERS:** All Requests for Personnel Action (RPAs) located in the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) or CPOC when the transition period starts, will be automatically moved from DCPDS at the Regions into a new centralized DCPDS at Rock Island. DCPDS will not be available to managers during the "transition period". The CPOCs will be able to access the system a few days earlier than managers to test the changes and begin processing actions. During the transition period, CPOCs will be working on functions that do not require DCPDS such as classifying jobs, rating and ranking applications, processing referral lists and other actions not requiring the automated system.

Army Regional Tools (ART) will continue to be available to all users of the system. The ART "Inbox Statistics" can be used to track the progress of individual RPAs during the transition period. Select the types of actions you wish to review, proceed to inbox statistics, and view details. By clicking on the RPA number, you will open a text window, allowing you to review and add comments about the request.

Current DCPDS users will be provided with a new DCPDS User ID and password prior to DCPDS coming back on-line. All users accessing Army applications at the central site (to include ART and DCPDS) must have the Army Knowledge On-line (AKO) account or their account will not be converted. After the transition period, users whose account was not converted will need to contact their CPOC Help Desk for assistance in order to access the central site. CPOCs are coordinating with CPACs to identify DCPDS users who do not have an AKO account. The CPACs will be contacting these Managers to build AKO accounts. Instructions for obtaining an AKO account can be found on the AKO website: <https://www.us.army.mil/> By clicking on "I'm a New User", you will see step-by-step instructions. We have noted a number of inconsistencies in the way users have created their AKO accounts. Please be mindful that the correct format for user name in AKO is (first name.last name).

**WHAT SHOULD MANAGERS DO?** If you have actions that are to be effective during the transition period noted above,

arrangements should be made to either have these actions fully processed before the transition period starts or after it completes. If you have questions regarding this or any other actions that may be affected by this transition, contact your servicing CPAC.

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES:** Should an emergency occur during the transition period, such as the death of a civilian employee, actions will be processed manually as expeditiously as possible. Notifications of Personnel Action will be created and provided to payroll as needed. Actions will be processed in DCPDS once the system is operational. Contact your servicing CPAC for details.

**IMPACT ON THE ARMY BENEFITS CENTER - CIVILIAN (ABC-C):** There is little impact on the ABC-C operation. Transactions can be created; however, will be held in pending status until DCPDS is operational. During the transition period, customers and counselors can view their actions in the projected areas of the Interactive Voice Response System / Employee Benefit Information System (IVRS/EBIS) system. Processing of retirement packages will be normal.

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## [Emergency Contact Data Instructions](#)

Due to the recent terrorist attacks and the continuing threats against all Americans, Army found it necessary to implement an automated method whereby all employees who are U.S. citizens may have their emergency contact data readily available in the event of an emergency or death of an employee.

The emergency data you provide will be stored and made available to only those authorized individuals who will be directly involved in the actual process of notifying your emergency contact(s) and processing or assisting with the necessary documents in the event of injury or death of an employee.

A screen consisting of the necessary data elements is available for you to complete on the Army website, <https://cpsapp2.belvoir.army.mil/emergencycontact/default.asp> or via <http://cpol.army.mil> under "What's New". In order to gain access to the database and enter your emergency contact information, you will first need to register as a "new user". Your social security number is being used since it is the one account that distinguishes you as an employee without duplication. Please note that when entering your social security number, it will not be displayed on the screen. As you enter your social security number, it will be represented on the screen by asterisks (\*).

The next screen will provide you with instructions to establish your password. After you have established your password, you will be able to proceed and enter your emergency contact data. Once you have successfully entered your emergency contact data, you can update and

change the information as changes occur. You must enter your user id and password each time you wish to access your account to modify or update your existing data.

As a practical tip, if the primary emergency contact listed is not an immediate relative, it is important for you to inform your emergency contacts in advance about how to locate your next of kin and/or dependents.

Your cooperation is needed to enable your agency to promptly notify the emergency contact of your choosing. Failure to provide this information could result in delay in the notification to your next of kin in the event of an emergency or death. Disclosure of your social security number is voluntary; however, failure to provide your social security number may delay the notification process. You'll be asked to review your emergency contact data on an annual basis and help keep the information current.

You should also consider updating designation of beneficiary forms if you believe the information is out of date.

The email address established for this project is [ECHELP@asamra.hoffman.army.mil](mailto:ECHELP@asamra.hoffman.army.mil). If you do not have access to a personal computer or the Internet, you should contact your first line supervisor.

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### [What's Hot in the Training World?](#)

Check out the Pacific Region Internet website at: <http://pacific-cpoc.ak.pac.army.mil/220600/index.html> for the latest information on training opportunities in the Pacific Region. Select Functional Areas; and then Training and Leader Development. The website is loaded with information and links to other training sites.

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### [Open Seasons](#)

- The next Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season will begin on 4/15/03 and will close on 6/30/03.
- The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season will begin 11/10/03 and will close on 12/08/03.

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### [myPay: The key to controlling your pay](#)

The website formerly known as Employee Member Self Service (E/MSS) has undergone a make over. This site, which gives employees online access to their leave and earnings statements (LES), can now be found at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>. Employees are encouraged to use MYPAY to view and print their biweekly LES instead of

having them mailed to their homes. Electing to receive your LES electronically can result in significant postage savings. In addition, your LES can be viewed and printed as early as the Friday preceding the actual pay date. The current and the two previous LES are always available for viewing and/or printing.

Additional features of MYPAY allow you to view and print tax statements; change federal and state tax withholdings; update bank account and electronic fund transfer information; manage allotments; make address changes; purchase U.S. Savings Bonds; and view and print travel vouchers.

Visit the website and obtain a copy of the new brochure on MYPAY (listed under Hot Topics). If you do not have a Personal Identification Number (PIN), you can obtain it via the current website.

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### [New OPM Position Classification Standard](#)

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has released for application the new Job Family Position Classification Standard for Physical Sciences Group, GS-1300. The standard covers one-grade interval technical positions in the following series: Physical Science Technician GS-1311; Hydrologic Technician GS-1316; Meteorological Technician GS-1341; Cartographic Technician GS-1371, and Geodetic Technician GS-1374. There are currently approximately 780 covered position descriptions in FASCLASS. No change in title or series of these positions is necessary. However, the new classification criteria are now in Factor Evaluation System (FES) factor level format, which is different from the previous narrative formats of all of the above series except that of Cartographic Technician GS-1371. For the latter, the previous FES factor levels and descriptions have been revised in the new standard. Application of this new standard should be completed within a year from issuance (October 2003). A memorandum is being released by Army to all major Commands with more complete information and implementing instructions.

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### [Revision of Standard Form 61](#)

An OPM memorandum dated October 31, 2002, states that the Standard Form 61, Appointment Affidavits, has been revised. The new edition is dated August 2002. The Change made to the form was in the note section at the bottom of the form and refers to objections to the oath on religious grounds and the changes that might be required pursuant to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The revised form is now available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/forms/>. Previous editions of this form are not usable.

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## **The Army is centralizing its automated referral system Initial Phase of the Resumix Centralization Transition is Complete.**

Army has consolidated all the resumes maintained by the Northeast, Southwest, South Central and North Central Civilian Personnel Operations Centers into one central database. This consolidation was completed in early September 2002. Europe CPOCs migration to the central database was completed on December 16, 2002. Please read the information below to find out what this means to you as an applicant:

One resume will be on file for the centralized regions. There is no need to submit a new resume if you have one on file.

Resumes submitted through the Army Civilian Resume Builder (<http://cpol.army.mil/> click on Employment, then Army's Resume Builder) will automatically flow into the centralized referral database. This is the fastest way to get a resume into the centralized referral database. If you are applying through the Army Civilian Resume Builder, you will continue to select the CPOCs as you do now to send your resume. The system will automatically send the resume to the CPOC you identified or to the centralized referral database as appropriate.

Applicants will submit a new resume after they have accepted a permanent position. This does not apply to temporary promotions or temporary reassignments.

Self-Nominations through the Vacancy Announcement Board (<http://cpol.army.mil/> click on Employment, then Army's Vacancy Announcements) will be posted automatically to the centralized referral database with on line confirmation.

ANSWER (<http://cpol.army.mil/>) click on Employment, then ANSWER) will be the method for applicant notification. It is the best way to review your most recent resume on file.

The Pacific and Korea CPOCs will join the consolidation soon. Until then, applicants wishing consideration for positions in any of the non-centralized regions will need to submit a separate resume with the appropriate supplemental data sheet to each of the non-centralized regions.

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## **Resumix Replaces Easy ACCES**

As of January 13, 2003, Resumix has become the recruitment tool for Army Career Program positions that were using Easy ACCES.

Career program employees will need to input their resumes into Resumix. If you have not done so yet, you can access Resumix by going to [www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil), click on Employment, then on Army's Resume Builder and follow the instructions. If you need assistance with Resumix, please

contact your servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC).

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