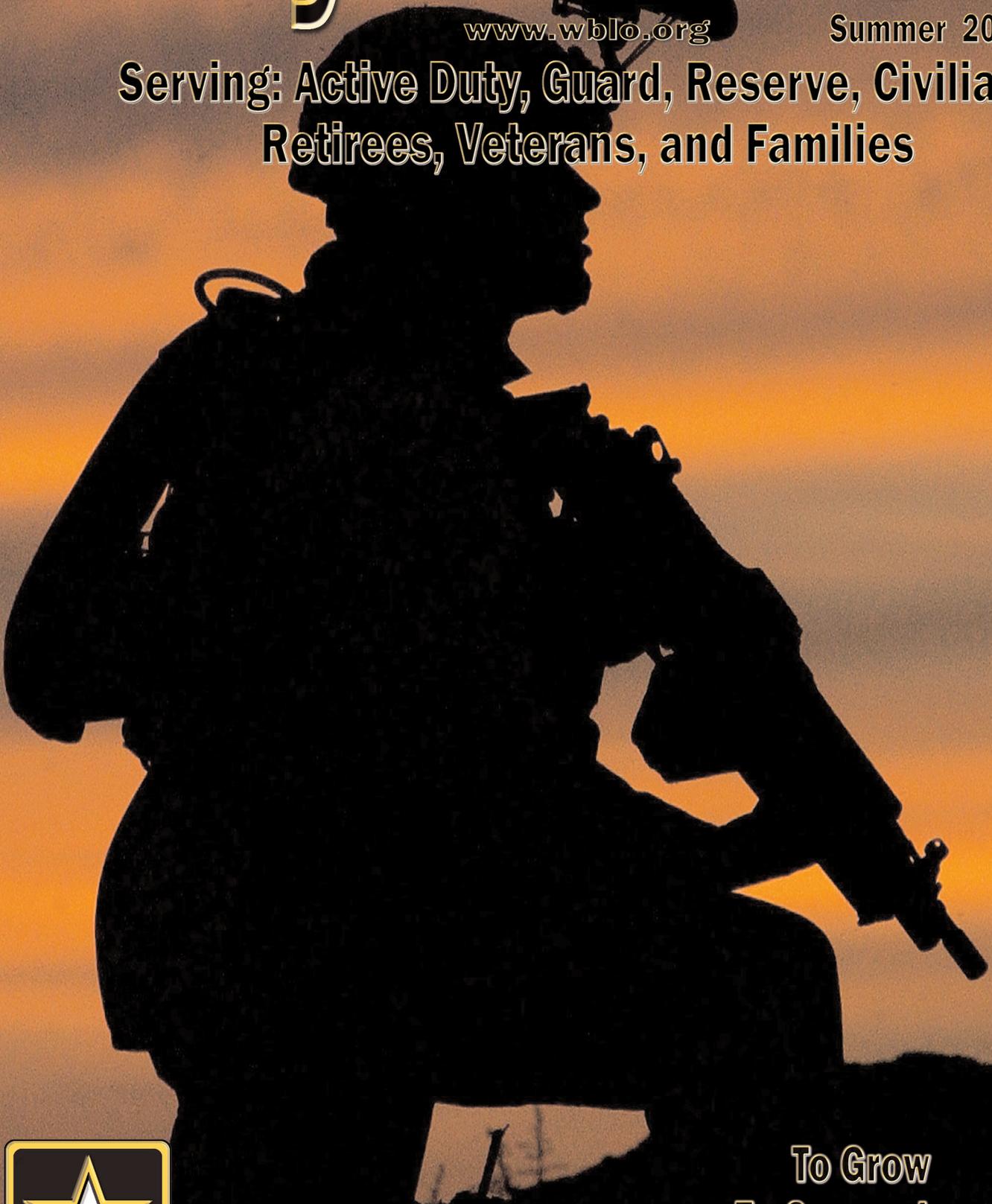


Army Well-Being

www.wblo.org

Summer 2004

Serving: Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, Civilians,
Retirees, Veterans, and Families



U.S. ARMY

To Grow
To Connect
To Live
To Serve



Army Well-Being

Vol. 2, No. 2

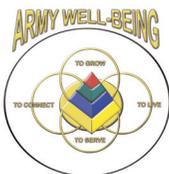
Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1
Lt. Gen. F. L. Hagenbeck

Chief, Well-Being Liaison Office
Mr. David G. White

Editor, Army Well-Being
Mr. Wayne V. Hall

Army Information Line
1-800-833-6622

WBLO Web site
www.wblo.org



Army Well-Being is produced in the interest of the members of the Army's Well-Being constituent communities - Soldiers (Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve), Civilians, Retirees, Veterans, and Families. Army Well-Being is an Army-funded magazine produced under the provisions of Army Regulation 360-1. Contents of Army Well-Being are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. Army Well-Being is published quarterly, and bulk shipped worldwide to commissaries, post exchange stores, Army Community Services offices, medical and dental facilities, recruiting brigades and National Guard and Reserve centers.

Address correspondence to Well-Being Liaison Office, Human Resources Policy Directorate, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, 300 Army Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310-0300.

Telephone: commercial (703) 696-5393, DSN 426-5393, or toll-free 1-800-833-6622; or e-mail: wayne.hall@hqda.army.mil.

On the cover



A 1st Infantry Division Soldier conducts a patrol as the sun sets near Logistical Supply Area Anaconda in Iraq.

DoD Photo

Army develops policy to address acts of sexual assault

By Sgt. 1st Class Marcia Triggs
Army News Service

The Army is devising a policy that will re-emphasize that all offenses of sexual assault must be reported to the Criminal Investigation Command, officials have announced.

A task force spent 90 days conducting a detailed review of the Army's current policies and programs on sexual assault. One of the findings was that while all commanders had taken action against assailants accused of sexual assault, not all were going through the proper investigation channels, said Darlene Sullivan, a task force member.

The task force was assembled from various Army organizations and began looking into how the Army addresses matters of sexual assault in February. Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee authorized the task force.

The task force recommendations were approved by Brownlee, and Reginald J. Brown, the assistant secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs was scheduled to brief the House Armed Services Committee in early June.

There were nine shortfalls the task force noted in its 80-page report. One major finding pointed out there was no standard way of handling sexual assault cases, making it hard to collect data and keep track of what services had been rendered to victims.

There were 24 recommendations made to improve the system. One was to develop a sexual assault policy for inclusion in Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy. The chief of personnel, Army G-1 is responsible for the overall sexual assault policy.

The policy will define sexual assault as alleged offenses of rape, forcible sodomy, assault with intent to commit rape or sodomy, indecent assault or an attempt to commit any of these offenses, Sullivan said. The definition is the same one used by the Department of Defense in its recent report "Care for Victims of Sexual Assault."

The roles and responsibilities of commanders from major command to the unit level will be addressed in the new policy and become a part of AR 600-20, said Lt. Col. John McPhaul of the G-1's Human Resources Policy Directorate.

"Commanders must create a command climate where victims feel comfortable reporting acts of sexual assault," Sullivan said. "Rape is one of the most unreported crimes nationwide.

"As a first sergeant, if you don't know your Soldier was attacked or raped, how can you protect that Soldier? What if you put that Soldier on guard duty with his or her attack-

er?" she continued. "It's imperative that leaders know that prevention, training and assistance are a commander's responsibility."

Company commanders will no longer have the authority to sign the disciplinary paperwork for Soldiers who are accused of a sexual offense, when the cases don't go to court. The battalion commander's signature will be required, Sullivan said.

Department of the Army Form 4833, Commander's Report of Disciplinary or Administrative Action, is a permanent record that states what a Soldier was accused of, and what action was taken against him.

Sullivan said the task force found that about 20 percent of the commanders had not filled out the form because of operational tempo. Another recommendation of the task force is to alter the form, so that instead of stating that administrative action was taken against a Soldier, his or her specific punishments will be listed on the form.

Commanders alone cannot round out a successful program to prevent sexual assault, according to the task force. Commanders alone cannot be the judge, juror and prosecutor.

In AR 600-20 one of the responsibilities commanders will have is to assign a unit victim advocate to support victims of sexual assault. It is important to keep the victim and the chain of command informed of all case actions as they occur with the case. The unit victim advocate will work to provide emotional support to victims while assisting them in the step-by-step processes involved, McPhaul said.

Other agencies whose roles will be outlined in the chapter will include Criminal Investigation Command (CID), the Provost Marshal, the Surgeon General, Staff Judge Advocate and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (Community and Family Support Center), McPhaul said.

"The Army agencies already have some procedures in place and know what to do, and are doing it, if an act of sexual assault occurs," McPhaul said, "but we must develop comprehensive policy of dealing with sexual assault from awareness/prevention, to victim support and data collection.

"We are developing a mechanism that gets all the agencies in concert with each other by establishing a policy that deals with sexual assault not only in garrison but in a deployed setting as well," McPhaul said.

Training requirements will also be addressed in the regulation, McPhaul said. Within the next 60 to 90 days, new chapters

See Policy on Page 4



Army to call up 5,600 IRR Soldiers

By Joe Burlas
Army News Service

The Army plans to order 5,600 Soldiers in the Individual Ready Reserve to active duty for possible deployment with the next Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom rotations.

Mailgrams notifying those Soldiers to expect mobilization orders were sent in early July, according to officials who announced the measure in a Pentagon press briefing June 30.

Soldiers called up have 30 days from the date the orders were issued to take care of personal business before reporting to a mobilization site, officials said. The orders call for 18 months of active duty, but may be extended for a total of 24 months if needed, they said.

The IRR call-up does not impact retired Soldiers, contrary to several civilian media reports on the subject that appeared on television and newspapers in late June.

"We're dipping into an available manpower pool," said Robert Smiley, principal assistant for Training, Readiness and Mobilization, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. "This is just good personnel management."

The IRR primarily consists of Soldiers who have served their contracted time on active duty or in an Army Reserve Troop Program Unit, but still have a military service obligation (MSO), said Col. Debra Cook, command-

er Human Resources Command – St. Louis, the Reserve's personnel management center.

Congress mandates under Title 10 of the U.S. Code that all services have an IRR.

Every Soldier, enlisted or commissioned, has an eight-year MSO when he or she joins the Army, Cook said. Often, that commitment is divided between active duty or a TPU assignment and the IRR.

"You might have one Soldier sign up for four years on active duty, who then has a four-year IRR commitment, and another Soldier who signs up to serve with a Ready Reserve unit for six years and two years in the IRR – both have IRR commitments to meet their military service obligations," Cook said. "The enlistment contract spells out exactly what the division is between how long they serve on active duty or a Ready Reserve unit and how long in the IRR."

This is not the first time the Army has used the IRR to fill its manpower needs. During the Gulf War, more than 20,000 IRR Soldiers were mobilized and deployed. Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Army has called up more than 2,500 IRR Soldiers – the majority through IRR volunteers, though some have been involuntary call-ups.

The main purpose of this IRR call-up is to fill personnel shortfalls in a number of Army National Guard and Reserve units tagged to deploy overseas as part of the OIF 3 and OEF 6 rotations in late fall, Smiley said. Many of

the personnel shortfalls are for Soldiers already assigned to the deploying units who are not deployable, he said.

The actual mobilization and deployment requirement is for about 4,400 Soldiers, but personnel officials expect to find some of the IRR Soldiers with similar issues that may keep them from being deployable.

Historically speaking, the Army needs to mobilize about 13 IRR Soldiers to get 10 deployable Soldiers, said Raymond Robinson, G-1 chief of Operations.

The called-up IRR Soldiers will spend about 30 days at a mobilization installation, getting checks to see if they are qualified for deployment, getting individual weapons qualification, conducting Common Task Testing and receiving training in a number of warrior tasks that reflect the realities of today's operating environment, including how to recognize an improvised explosive device and reacting to an ambush.

Those who do not pass the readiness muster at the mobilization installation for reasons including anything from medical and legal reasons to physical challenges may be disqualified and sent home, Robinson said. Those who pass the muster will be sent on to military occupational specialty schools to get refresher training, normally lasting between two to four weeks. The final stop is joining the deploying unit at least 30 days before deployment for collective training as a unit.

While the specific jobs the called-up Soldiers will fill are varied, Cook said the heaviest requirements include truck drivers, mechanics, logistics personnel and administrative specialists.

"We will not deploy any Soldier who is not trained or ready," said Bernard Oliphant, deputy for the Army Operations Center's Mobilization Division, G-3.

Many of the Soldiers being called back to active duty through this IRR call-up do not live near an Army installation. Therefore their families may not have a good understanding of where to turn for assistance during the Soldier's deployment.

The Army's Well-Being Liaison Office (WBLO) provides these families with valuable resources – the Army Families Online Web site (www.wblo.org), which features helpful information and resources and a robust "SmartBook" that provides links and phone numbers for many agencies and organizations that are available to provide assistance; and the Army Information Line (1-800-833-6622),



Department of Defense photo

Keeping Iraq secure

Sgt. Jose Flores, of Company C., 2nd Battalion 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, mans a turret in his vehicle while on patrol in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Mounted patrols conducted by cavalry Soldiers are helping to defeat insurgents in Iraq.

See Call-Up on Page 4



ARA helps Soldiers switch to active duty

By Pfc. Chris Stump
Army News Service

Service to country, a steady pay check, college benefits or retirement at a young age; whatever the reason for choosing to go on active duty, many Army National Guard and Reserve Soldiers are taking advantage of an easy route to become a full-time Soldier. And the career counselors of the U.S. Army Reserve Affairs Office assist with transition.

Soldiers who begin the switch while still deployed, with the assistance of a reserve affairs NCO, must complete an application packet. The packet includes information such as time in service, rank, grade and other personal information essential for enlisting.

To convert from the reserves, a deployed Soldier must have more than 30 days left on his or her deployment, but less than 90 days when requesting a transfer to active duty, said Master Sgt. Greg Jacobs, Army Reserve Affairs retention NCO.

The change to active duty is actually made once the Soldier redeployes and separates from his or her unit. Once separated, the Soldier goes on leave as an active-duty Soldier with orders to report to an active-duty unit.

The packet is not difficult to fill out, Jacobs said, but anyone wishing to make the switch to active duty is advised to start the paperwork as soon as possible. This gives the reserve affairs NCOs more opportunity to assist them, without having to rush through the process.

"We are here to help the Soldiers any way we can," he said. "From filling out the packet, to linking them with active-duty career counselors, we will do whatever we can."

After the application is completed, it is sent

to active-duty career counselors who verify information, like rank and time in service, and send the packet on to the Army Human Resources Command in Alexandria, Va., for approval.

Upon final HRC approval, the Army begins the process of finding an opening for the Soldier, he said.

All ranks and military occupational specialties are eligible to leave the National Guard and Army Reserve to transfer to the active Army, but there must be a slot open for the Soldier, he said.

"Depending on the needs of the Army, some Soldiers may need to reclass[ify]," Jacobs said.

Because of the differences in jobs and positions available between the reserve and active duty components, a handful of Soldiers might lose rank or have to reclassify into another MOS, he added, but for the most part, Soldiers retain their rank and job in transitioning to the active component.

In addition, many are also eligible for bonuses for making the switch. Bonus eligibility applies to those Soldiers who reclassify to join active duty.

"The enlistment bonuses are paid by the active Army component," Jacobs said. "In some instances, Soldiers may qualify for whatever bonus the Army has available."

Often these bonuses also depend on the length of an enlistment. According to Jacobs, an enlistment contract can range anywhere from two to six years.

"How long your enlistment has to be is usually determined by your MOS," Jacobs said. "Critical shortages can affect the length of an enlistment, as well as the training you

are receiving if you reclass[ify]."

An example is military intelligence. Because this field is considered to have a critical shortage, combined with extensive training time and cost, many Soldiers are required to enlist for five years.

While bonuses are a great incentive to joining the military, they aren't the only reason people switch to active duty, Jacobs said. Many Soldiers simply find they enjoy the active Army experience of service.

"Some Soldiers come on active duty for a deployment and realize they like the active Army and decide to stay," he said. "Others may have jobs that won't be available when they redeploy."

Others just like the steady paycheck or career benefits, he added.

"There are great career benefits," said Staff Sgt. Jack O'Neal, 320th Psychological Operations Company, who plans on making the transition after his tour in Afghanistan.

One of those benefits is being able to retire at an early age, he said.

"And they have 100-percent [college] tuition reimbursement while you're on active duty," he said.

Regardless of the reason a Soldier wants to go active, the Army Reserve Affairs office is here to help, Jacobs said.

"The Soldier must be willing to take the time to put together the packet," he said. "The legwork is done by the Soldier, but we will do whatever we can for him."

For more information on switching to active duty, contact the Army Reserve Affairs office at 1-800-874-8451.

Editor's note: Stump is assigned to the 17th Public Affairs Detachment.

Policy

From Page 2

will be added to the regulation and staffed with the field, he added.

Training and Doctrine Command is currently devising lesson plans on the prevention of sexual assault to be included in all professional development schools, refresher courses at the unit level and additional training for law enforcement, medical and legal personnel, Sullivan said.

When looking for ways to improve the Army's policies and programs, the task force sought advice from outside agencies to include Department of Veterans Affairs;

National Organization of Victim Assistance; Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN); The Miles Foundation, Navy, Coast Guard and the University of Arizona and Purdue University in Indiana.

Both universities were given grants from the Department of Justice for their prevention programs, Sullivan said. The age category for the Soldiers who report the assaults and their assailants are in the same age category as the university students, she added. Nearly 84 percent of alleged perpetrators were identified as junior Soldiers, and 95 percent of the victims were in the rank of staff sergeant and below, according to the task force report.

Call-Up

From Page 3

which is a toll-free telephone resource to provide accurate information, resources and referral services to those with issues or concerns pertaining to Army Life, such as deployment, child support, and family readiness.

The Army Information Line serves as a safety net for those who have exhausted all other resources. WBLO Constituent Liaisons are available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday to assist members of the Army's constituent communities.

As of June 22, the IRR contained slightly more than 111,000 Soldiers.

Editor's note: *Wayne V. Hall of the Well-Being Liaison Office contributed to this article.*



Thousands to be reimbursed for onward R&R Leave travel

Well-Being Liaison Office

The Army announced in late June that some 32,000 troops are now eligible to receive retroactive reimbursement for out-of-pocket costs paid for air travel in conjunction with the U.S. Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program last year.

This policy, directed by Congress, affects servicemembers who took R&R leave between Sept. 25 and Dec. 18, 2003, from duty stations in Afghanistan and Iraq, said Hank Minitrez of the Well-Being Division.

These servicemembers traveled free of charge from Afghanistan or Iraq to either Baltimore-Washington International Airport in Largo, Md., or Frankfurt International Airport in Germany. However, servicemembers were required to pay for onward travel to their final destination.

The reimbursements are meant to cover servicemembers' airline ticket costs for to-and-from travel between their R&R leave destination and the stateside aerial points of debarkation, Minitrez said. Additionally, points of debarkation may include BWI, Dallas-Fort Worth and Atlanta airports.

"We at least owe them that much for what they've sacrificed," Minitrez said.

Congress urged DoD to approve coverage of onward R&R travel cost for servicemembers



Sgt. 1st Class Marcia Triggs

Spc. Mark Chalmers and Staff Sgt. Robert Ponte, both National Guardsmen, wait for their departing plane at BWI Airport in Oct. 2003 after enjoying rest and recuperation leave. Soldiers will now be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket onward travel costs.

last December. However, those instructions did not allow for retroactive onward travel reimbursements for servicemembers who participated in the R&R Leave Program prior to Dec. 19. A change to those instructions was approved in mid June.

Soldiers make up the majority of the servicemembers on the list of those eligible for reimbursement, which also includes five Air Force personnel, Minitrez said.

Additionally, the reimbursement policy applies only to servicemembers deployed on one-year tours of duty for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation

Iraqi Freedom, he said. Marines serving in these missions do so for seven-month tours, and therefore are not eligible. Government civilian employees are also not eligible for reimbursement.

About \$14 million, of the \$55 million allotted by Congress for CENTCOM to use for onward travel, has funded commercial airline tickets paid directly to travel ticketing offices for connecting flights or been paid directly to Soldiers who've provided proper documentation for travel costs.

The Army expects the reimbursements for the missed groups of Soldiers to cost between \$13

and \$19 million, said Lt. Col. Bobbie Sanders, deputy chief for the Well-Being Division's R&R Task Force.

Soldiers who are eligible for reimbursement should file a claim through their servicing finance office. Eligible discharged Soldiers should file a claim directly through DFAS via e-mail to: dfas-inr&rlleave@dfas.mil; or via regular mail to: DFAS-IN, Contingency Travel Operations, Department 3900, ATTN: R&R Leave, 8899 East 56th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46249-3900.

Servicemembers who have left the military have six years to file for the reimbursement, said Sheila Melton, an accountant with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Indianapolis branch.

Soldiers should include the following information with their reimbursement travel claim:

- A completed Department of Defense Form 1351-2, Travel Voucher.
- A copy of leave documentation (Department of the Army Form 31 or R&R Leave Order) containing a fund cite.
- A copy of the airline ticket, ticket receipt or airline travel itinerary that shows the Soldier – not an Army fund cite – paid for the ticket.

Soldiers who no longer have copies of their airline ticket, or a ticket receipt should contact the airline from which they bought their tickets for onward travel.

Additionally, Soldiers who have lost copies and are unable to obtain copies or the required documentation may submit a lost documentation statement with their travel voucher. The statement must include the Soldier's name, Social Security number, leave dates, the name of the airline used for onward travel, name of final destination airport and the cost of the ticket.

More information concerning the reimbursement program and the CENTCOM R&R Leave Program, may be found at www.armyg1.army.mil/WellBeing/RRLeave/index.HTM.

DoD expands troop anthrax, smallpox vaccinations

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

More servicemembers – including those serving in South Korea – will be vaccinated against smallpox and anthrax.

The availability of additional smallpox and anthrax vaccine will enable the vaccination of all servicemembers assigned to U.S. Central Command, and many serving in U.S. Pacific Command, including troops assigned on the Korean Peninsula, said Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant secretary of defense for Health Affairs.

Winkenwerder said he couldn't provide numbers of troops affected by the policy change, other than saying "tens of thousands" would be vaccinated. The

policy change wasn't precipitated by a definite increase of threat to troops.

"There is no substantial change to the threat situation," Winkenwerder said.

However, Brig. Gen. David Rodriguez, a Joint Staff spokesman, said that Central Intelligence Agency Director George Tenet noted earlier this year that al Qaeda is interested in acquiring bio-weapons like smallpox and anthrax.

Medical studies have shown that administration of the vaccines poses little threat to servicemembers' health, Winkenwerder said. Since June 2002, DoD has vaccinated more than 750,000 troops against anthrax, and more than a million since 1998. Since December 2002, more than 625,000 troops have received smallpox vaccinations.



Army launches 'Be Safe' safety campaign

By Wayne V. Hall
Well-Being Liaison Office

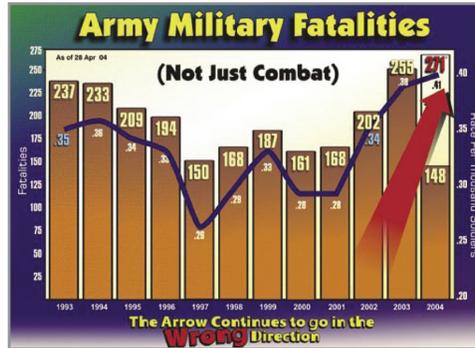
The Secretary of the Army recently initiated the "Be Safe" campaign in an effort to educate Soldiers to keep them alive and well.

"Statistically, this has been a rough year for Army accident casualties," Brig. Gen. Joseph Smith, director of Army Safety told the Army News Service in a May interview.

"During our first year of operations in Iraq, 422 American Soldiers have died in country; of these over 26 percent were non-combat accidents," according to a joint letter from Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Skoomaker and Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee in the Army Safety Campaign Plan. "In the past 23 years over 7,500 Soldiers have died in accidents, compared to fewer than 600 in combat. Last year's total accident death rate was the highest in 10 years."

Since the beginning of the year the Army has lost 168 Soldiers due to accidents. Nearly 65 percent of Soldier fatalities were related to motor vehicle accidents – 39 percent in privately owned vehicle accidents, and 26 percent in Army motor vehicles or combat vehicles. The other 35 percent of Soldier fatalities were the result of fire, personal injury and aviation accidents.

"Nearly all of them were preventable had the victims taken the proper precautions or operated those vehicles in a safe manner," the joint letter said.



U.S. Army Safety Center

* Projection based on a 5-year historical average of the ratio of fatalities from March 9 through the remainder of the year.

"We want our troops to be safe and make it home when participating in everyday activities that can lead to accidents such as driving, swimming and biking," Smith said.

Accident fatalities are not only high in the Army, but across the armed services. Therefore, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has charged leaders of all services to reduce the number of accidental deaths by at least 50 percent by May 2005.

A key element of the Army's safety campaign is a new "Be Safe" video that will be shown to all Soldiers.

The video, a joint effort by the Army Safety Center and General Motors, was created to get an aggressive message out to all

Soldiers. It was made for the Army exclusively by GM, was shot at Fort Campbell, Ky., and features former Mississippi State Trooper Capt. Peter Collins speaking to Soldiers about how to be a safe driver.

While the video is primarily directed towards Soldiers, it does take into account all aspects of a Soldier's life and is available to all members of the military community including Department of the Army civilian employees, defense contractors and family members.

"Safety has to be personal," said J.T. Coleman, the command information manager at the Army Safety Center. "We are trying to protect our most valuable asset, our sons and daughters, and have them realize the effect they have on others."

The primary target for the campaign has been the 19- to 24-year-old male, however Army Safety officials are attempting to reach all young Soldiers. Army Safety Center statistics show that Soldiers are most at risk during the last 6 to 12 hours as they return to base from a three-day pass.

Army leaders acknowledge that it will take great efforts among leadership to ensure the success of the Army's safety campaign. However, safety is not just a leader's responsibility, it is everyone's responsibility.

For more information on the "Be Safe," campaign or to watch the "Be Safe" video, visit the Army Safety Center Web site – <https://safety.army.mil/home.html>.

Group seeks to provide free childcare to Reserve Component Soldiers on R&R leave

By Kathleen T. Rhem
American Forces Press Service

A nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families find high-quality childcare is working to provide free care to Army National Guard and Reserve Soldiers on rest-and-recuperation leave.

The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies launched "Operation Child Care" in May. To date, more than 5,000 childcare providers have signed on to provide at least four free hours of childcare to RC Soldiers.

According to a news release from the program, childcare providers who meet state and local childcare regulations will

provide four or more hours of free childcare so Soldiers can attend to family business or just take their spouses out for a date.

Three major commercial chains that specialize in childcare – KinderCare Learning Centers, Bright Horizons Family Solutions and LaPetite Academy centers – also have signed on to provide free care. KinderCare and LaPetite are each providing one full day of childcare free of charge to eligible Soldiers. Bright Horizons is providing two days of free childcare.

Linda Smith, executive director of NACCRRRA, said the idea for Operation Child Care came out of a discussion she had in October with an official who oversees childcare centers for the

Army. The two were discussing circumstances facing troops in today's high-paced military.

The following week, Smith pitched the idea to a group of state childcare referral specialists at a meeting in Chicago and got an overwhelming response. "They all wanted to support it," she said.

Volunteer providers are spread through communities across the country. Reserve Component Soldiers who are seeking care for their children can find local providers through Operation Child Care's Web site –

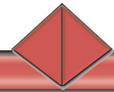
www.childcareaware.org/en/operationchildcare/. The site also features helpful information concerning childcare and parenting.

Smith said they decided to target the program to RC Soldiers

because they generally don't have the same support system available to active-duty Soldiers on bases.

Family-childcare provider Chris Milton, who has volunteered to provide free childcare through the program, knows firsthand the challenges facing military families. Her younger brother was deployed in Operation Desert Storm. He missed Milton's wedding and the birth of his own daughter during that deployment.

"Our family lost a lot [of family time] when my brother served," said Milton, who cares for children in her Connecticut home. It's important "just to be able to help these other families at this time, because I know it's so hard."



New procedures to speed overseas absentee balloting

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

Absentee ballots from service-members overseas will move faster and with greater control for the 2004 elections, DoD and U.S. Postal Service officials said.

Charles S. Abell, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for Personnel and Readiness, and Paul Vogel, the Postal Service's vice president for network operations management, discussed the changes made in the absentee balloting process for 2004.

"We've had a year of getting ready for the upcoming federal election, focusing on how we can help military personnel, their families and civilians overseas to exercise their right to vote," Abell said. "As we have looked at every

sort of situation, problem and impediment and tried to resolve them, we have come to another resolution to help us move ballots and ballot request materials from the hand of the overseas Soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or family member to their county boards of elections."

Vogel said USPS has been working with the Military Postal Service Agency to improve the process, "because it is that important – especially with a presidential election year coming up. If it's even as remotely close as the last election was, every ballot really counts."

Vogel said the DoD/USPS team has put together a process that will expedite overseas absentee balloting mail flow and give greater accountability.

Essentially, the Postal Service

will ask local postmasters to contact the officials in counties that are responsible for mailing ballots and to whom completed ballots are returned. "Traditionally, 30 to 45 days in advance of the elections, the blank ballots will be mailed out from those counties," Vogel said.

The Postal Service is asking the county officials to hold out the military ballots. Local postmasters will take those ballots and sort them for three different destinations: San Francisco for servicemembers based around the Pacific Rim; New York for Europe; and the Middle East and Miami for Central and South America. The balloting materials will go to those destinations via the Postal Service's Express Mail service, Vogel said.

Once at these military mail

"gateways," Postal Service managers will log in the Express Mail pieces and sort them to the different military ZIP codes. "All the balloting material will be sorted first," Vogel said. They will go into specially marked mail trays and handed over to the airlines.

In theater, military postal officials will ensure balloting materials are again given priority.

Once servicemembers vote, the reverse process is the same. One change, however, is that when ballots are received at the APO or FPO, mail clerks will put postal cancellation marks on the envelopes. This gives an accurate measure of the date and time a ballot is received.

At the postal gateways, ballots will go back into the normal mail flow that allows for a three-day delivery, Vogel said.

But on Oct. 30, Postal officials will again segregate balloting materials and use express mail to send ballots back to county officials. Election Day is Nov. 2, but these special-handling procedures will continue through Nov. 8, Vogel said. However, some ballots received after Election Day may not be counted, because different jurisdictions have different voting requirements.

To be on the safe side, DoD and the Postal Service recommend servicemembers and their families follow Federal Voting Assistance Program guidelines. FVAP is designating the week of Sept. 6 as Get Out the Vote Week.

They are also designating the week beginning Oct. 11 as Overseas Voting Week. "If you vote that week, your ballot should arrive back at your home ... before Election Day, which will qualify your ballot to be counted in every state, county and precinct," Abell said.

Traditionally, servicemembers and their families vote at a higher percentage than the general population. All administrations have encouraged servicemembers to exercise their right to vote. "We don't care how they vote, just so long as they do," Abell said.

Counsel outlines political limits for Army personnel

By Courtney Hickson

Army News Service

As the 2004 election draws closer, Soldiers and Army employees face restrictions on political activities different from those that apply to the general public.

Federal and state employees fall under the guidelines of the Hatch Act and its amendments. Political restrictions for Soldiers are detailed in Army Regulation 600-20.

"The statutory and regulatory guidance pertaining to the political activities of Soldiers and government employees is difficult to summarize in a short news article," said Maj. John Muehlheuser of the Office of The Judge Advocate General's General Law Branch Administrative Law Division. Soldiers and government employees should consult the statutes and regulations applicable to their specific situation before participating in political activities.

Legal restrictions are placed upon DoD personnel because they are public servants. Also, there is a long-standing DoD policy barring personnel in their official capacity from engaging in activities that associate DoD with partisan political campaign, election, candidate, cause or issue.

Among other restrictions, federal employees may not solicit or receive political contributions or engage in political activity while on duty in a

government office, while wearing an official uniform or driving a government vehicle.

Additionally, many federal and state employees are not permitted to run in a partisan election. According to the Office of the Special Counsel Web site – www.osc.gov – the process for running for this type of election begins when the candidate begins to collect signatures, schedules fundraisers, files a nominating petition, makes an announcement to the press or puts a campaign committee together.

Under the provisions of AR 600-20, paragraph 5-3, an active-duty Soldier may not participate in partisan political management, campaigns, or conventions, including solicitation of votes or political contributions.

Muehlheuser said changes in the duty status of National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers change the rules applicable to their political activities. For example, Soldiers ordered to extended active duty must adhere to additional restrictions on political activities.

Government employees with questions regarding the propriety of prospective political activities, or concerns about possible violations, can contact the Hatch Act Hot line at the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, 1-800-854-2824 or via e-mail to HATCHACT@OSC.GOV. Members of the Army may also contact their installation legal office for assistance.

Constituent Roundup

Active Duty

Active-duty Soldiers nearing the end of their service contract may not be getting out of the Army as soon as they might have expected.

Recent changes in the Active Army Stop Loss/Stop Movement Program synchronize the process of units being notified of deployments with Stop Loss actions. The previous process required a separation action to request the initiation of Stop Loss after the unit received official deployment notification.

Now the program will be effective 90 days prior to the Earliest Arrival Date (EAD), specified in the deployment order. Soldiers will remain affected by Stop Loss/Stop Movement up to 90 days after they redeploy to their home station.

These additional days are required to take care of the Soldiers by ensuring their medical and dental needs are completely taken care of, as well as any other out-processing needs.

There is however some allowance for separation of Soldiers. For more information, refer to Army MILPER Message No. 04-169, which can be found on the Army's Human Resources Command Web site – <https://www.hrc.army.mil>.

– *Army News Service*

National Guard

The Freedom Salute Campaign is well into its second phase honoring an estimated 70,000 Army National Guard Soldiers.

This campaign is one of the largest Army National Guard recognition endeavors in history – designed to publicly acknowledge Guard Soldiers and those who supported them during the President's call to duty for recent military operations.

Eligible Soldiers will receive an encased American flag, a commemorative coin, a certificate of appreciation and a lapel insignia. The Soldier's spouse will receive a lapel insignia.

To learn more about this recognition opportunity for Soldiers visit www.virtualarmory.com/freedom/FreedomSalute_public.asp.

– *National Guard Bureau*

Army Reserve

Since early May, the Army Reserve's Retention and Transition Division has been contacting Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Soldiers with a remaining Mandatory Service Obligation (MSO) to solicit their voluntary transfer from the IRR to

Army Reserve Troop Program Units (TPU). In conjunction with a screening of the IRR population by HRC-St. Louis, this effort was intended to match the skills of IRR Soldiers with units in their local areas, thereby enhancing the readiness of the Army Reserve.

Although every effort will be made to meet our personnel needs with volunteers, involuntary mobilization of IRR Soldiers can be executed with the approval of competent authority. The Army Reserve is an integral component of an Army serving our Nation at war. Those members of the IRR who still have a remaining contractual obligation may be called upon to serve, subject to the needs of the Army.

For more information contact the U.S. Army Reserve Command Retention and Transition Office toll-free at 1-866-401-9443, Ext. 571.

– *U.S. Army Reserve Command*

Civilian Employees

The Office of Personnel Management recently announced the first open season for the Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI) since 1999. The FEGLI 2004 Open Season is being conducted to celebrate the program's 50th anniversary, and is scheduled for Sept. 1 through 30.

The FEGLI program consists of basic life insurance coverage and three options that include coverage for up to five times an employee's base salary plus coverage for family members. In most cases, a new Federal employee is automatically covered by basic life insurance. The types and amounts of coverage available are not changing.

During the open season, Federal and Postal employees in eligible positions will be able to enroll in the FEGLI program or increase or change current coverage without having a physical or answering any questions about their health. The earliest that newly elected coverage will be effective is Sept. 1, 2005.

OPM will have a special FEGLI 2004 Open Season Web site set up prior to the start of the open season which will contain an election form and more information about the program.

– *Office of Personnel Management*

Retirees

The Army Chief of Staff's Retiree Council closed its 44th meeting with a report to the Army Chief of Staff citing healthcare and communications with and education of retirees as the Council's two primary concerns.

The Council also urged the CSA to support

efforts to take care of surviving spouses through elimination of Social Security offset to Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefits and eliminating the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset to SBP, and to support retirees who have paid SBP premiums for 30 years or more by accelerating the date for the paid-up provision of SBP from 2008 to 2004.

The Council's suggestions concerning healthcare included raising TRICARE reimbursement levels; extending retiree dental insurance to OCONUS retirees; remaining engaged in efforts to notify TFL-eligible beneficiaries about the waiving of late enrollment fees for Medicare Part B; and continuing to support collaborative efforts between DoD and VA healthcare departments.

For more information on the Council's recommendations, or other retiree issues, see Army Echoes online at www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/echoes.asp.

– *Army Retirement Services*

Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that veterans will now be able to access their Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) accounts at any time of the day or night from any computer or telephone.

Using a secure Web site, the VGLI Online Account Access system allows veterans to obtain basic information on their account through the insurance Web site – www.insurance.va.gov.

Veterans can also access their account information through a new VGLI interactive voice response system by calling toll-free at 1-800-419-1473.

– *Department of Veterans Affairs*

Army Families

Army Families Online – www.wblo.org – continues to be the leading online resource for Army Families. The site, provided by the Well-Being Liaison Office, features valuable news and information relevant to Army Life; a robust "SmartBook" that offers one-stop access to information and resources through Web links and phone numbers; as well as access to electronic versions of Well-Being publications.

The WBLO also staffs the Army Information Line (1-800-833-6622), a toll-free telephone resource to provide accurate information, useful resources and helpful referral services. The line is a safety net for those who have exhausted all other resources, and is staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday.

– *Well-Being Liaison Office*