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The Total Force Utilization Policy: Compensation and You

THE Secretary of Defense redefined mobilization policy when he issued his *“Utilization of the Total Force”* memorandum on 19 January 2007. In the memorandum, Secretary Gates identified six key areas of mobilization policy to be adjusted in order to better manage the Reserve components during the prosecution of the Global War on Terrorism. These six key policy modifications include: setting the length of involuntary mobilization at a maximum of 12 months; mobilizing ground forces on a unit basis vice as individuals; establishing a planning objective with a ratio of one-year mobilization followed by five years of “dwell time” (time not mobilized); establishing a new program to compensate or incentivize members required to mobilize or deploy early or often, or be extended beyond established rotation policy goals; reviewing hardship waiver programs to ensure they are properly taking into account exceptional circumstances; and, minimizing the use of stop loss as a force management tool.¹

The fourth policy modification—establishing a new compensation or incentive program—has taken some time for policy makers to reach consensus on the plan. The Department of Defense (DoD), the Joint Staff and the Services spent several months considering which elements should compromise this new compensation/incentive program envisioned by the Secretary of Defense. Both monetary and non-monetary compensation options, as well as a combination of both, were discussed. The following paragraphs highlight the components of the approved compensation program.

On 18 April 2007, the Under Secretary of Defense, Dr. David Chu, issued the *Programs to Support Utilization of the Total Force* memorandum detailing three baseline components that make up the new compensation plan. The three baseline components are: (1) the continuation of Extra Hardship Duty Pay (HDP)/Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP) for involuntary and voluntary extensions beyond 12-month Boots-on-the Ground (BOG) in Afghanistan, Iraq or Certain Theater Units; (2) the authorization for Service Secretaries to pay AIP, in addition to all other pay and allowances, for members who volunteer to serve in designated critical assignments; and, (3) the establishment of a new type of administrative absence referred to as Post-Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence, or “Respite Absence” for short. The first two incentives were already in place and are widely known. The third option, developed to recognize members who are deployed or mobilized beyond rotation frequency thresholds, has not been well understood and aside from the Marine Corps, Service implementation plans

have not yet been published.²

This Respite Absence policy enables Reserve members to accrue days of administrative absence when their force rotation goals are broken. Reserve members are eligible to apply “creditable time” toward respite absence beginning with the first day of mobilization (under sections 12301a, 12302, or 12304 of Title 10) through the mobilization termination date based on the accrual table in Figure 1 below:

Reserve members may start computing creditable time

RESPITE ABSENCE ACCRUAL TABLE

How days of Respite Absence are earned based on the following Mobilization Thresholds:

- 1 Day of Respite Absence per month for 13-18 months mobilized
- 2 Days of Respite Absence per month for 19-24 months mobilized
- 4 Days of Respite Absence per month for more than 24 months mobilized

Accrual is based on the number of months involuntarily mobilized out of the previous (rolling) 72-month period.

Figure 1: Respite Absence Accrual Table.
(Source - Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs)

starting on 7 October 2001 or the date that is 72 months prior to the member’s most recent mobilization, whichever comes first.³

Consider the illustration in Figure 2 on page 10 where the DoD mobilization goal of one year (maximum) followed by 5 years dwell is graphically depicted at the top of the illustration. Now compare this to the “Army Example” in Figure 2. Suppose this example depicts an Army guardsman who was mobilized for 18 months during 2003-2004 and is now on his second involuntary mobilization of 12 months starting in January 2007. This guardsman would accrue a total of 36 days of Respite Absence during this second mobilization, which breaks down into 12 days in the first six months and an additional 24 days in the last six months of this most recent mobilization. Here’s how this total is calculated: the guardsman accrues 12 days of Respite Absence in the first six months of this second mobilization because he gets two days of Respite Absence each month when mobilized for 19-24 months in the previous 72-month period (see Figure 1 above). Similarly, the guardsman accrues an additional 24 days of Respite Absence in the final six months of this second mobilization, which is based on getting four days of Respite Absence each month when mobilized in excess of 24 months in the previous 72-month period. Figure 2 (on page 10) also shows notional

examples for the Marine Corps and Air Force Reserves.

The current policy has several positive aspects that provide service members with both short and long term benefits, despite some disagreement by various stakeholders as to what is optimal compensation – monetary or non-monetary. Short-term benefits include collecting pay and allowances while on a sanctioned day off and retaining full health care benefits. Except for federal employees, Guard and Reserve members can also return to their civilian jobs while

could receive a total of \$3,600 over the 12-month mobilization period (\$200 per day for first 6 months and \$400 per day last 6 months) if he elects the cash payment option in lieu of Respite Absence prior to his second mobilization period.

Determining what makes up an appropriate total force compensation continues to evolve as policymakers review pay and benefits with the objective of achieving the optimal package that recognizes the stress being placed on the force and sacrifices being made by active, Guard and Reserve members.

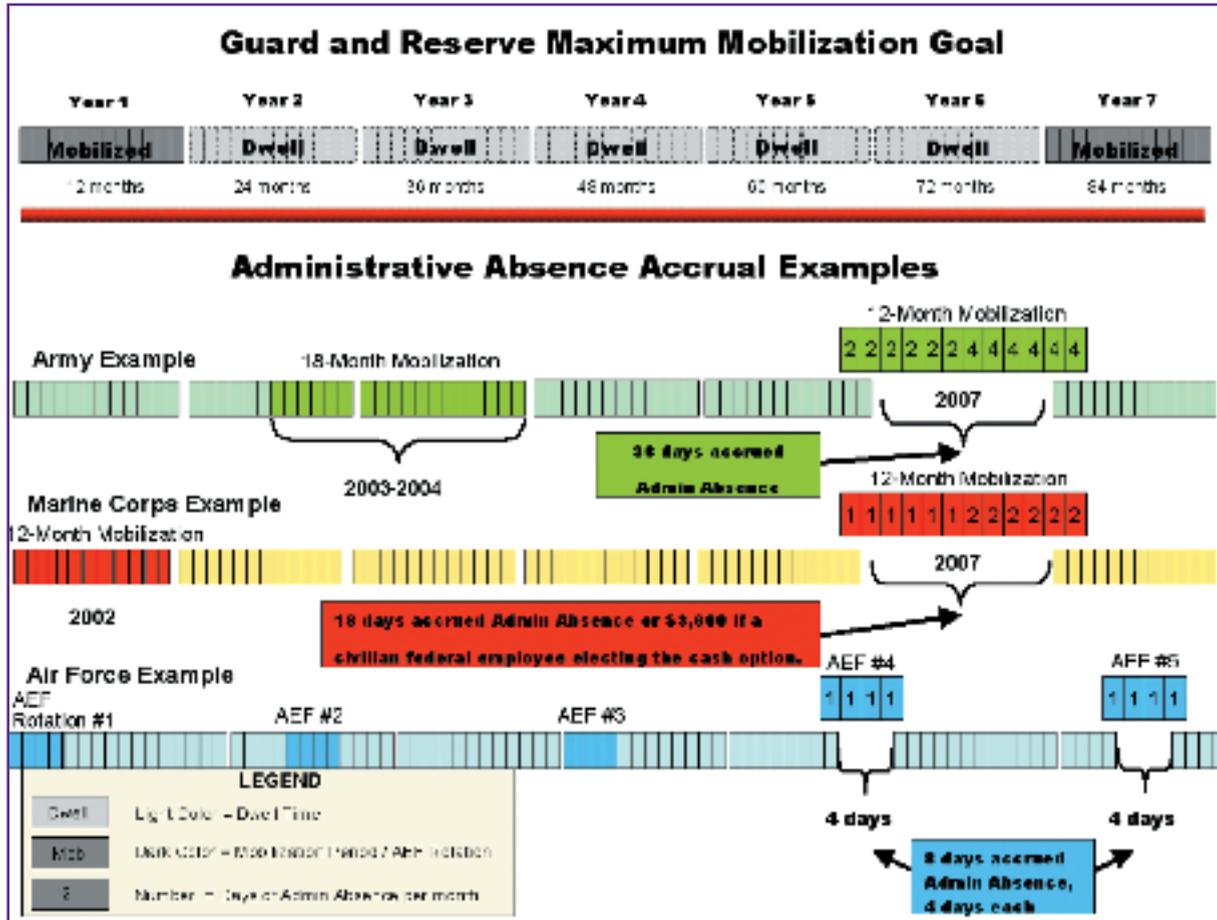


Figure 2: Guard and Reserve Maximum Mobilization Goal and Respite Absence Accrual Examples (Source - Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs).

taking their Respite Absence—just as they can while on terminal leave—which will allow them to receive their civilian salary and military pay and allowances at the same time. Long-term or deferred benefits include the accrual of retirement points for the additional days of active duty. In the previous example, a career guardsman would have also earned 36 retirement points during the period of Respite Absence.

While DoD is working to change the law that precludes a federal employee from receiving both their civilian salary and military pay while on Respite Absence, DoD has instituted a policy that allows reservists who are adversely affected by the law to elect to receive \$200 AIP for each day of Respite Absence they will earn (not to exceed \$3,000 maximum monthly payable amount).⁴ The only caution is that this election must be made before the member begins accruing days of Respite Absence. In the Marine Corps Reserve example in Figure 2 above, the Marine reservists, in this case also a civilian federal employee,

1. Secretary of Defense memorandum Utilization of the Total Force, dated 19 Jan 07. View this memorandum at https://ca.dtic.mil/jcs/ngrm/tp/gates_tfp_policy_memo_19jan07.pdf.

2. As of 27 July 07, only the Marine Corps had issued its policy. The Marine Corps issued its implementation guidance in Marine Administrative (MARADMIN) Message 448/07 on 27 July 07. View the Marine Corps guidance at <http://www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf/37f49138fc3d9c00852569b9000af6b7/b5100d203aefb5808525732500431155?OpenDocument>

3. USD/PR memorandum Programs to Support Utilization of the Force, dated 18 Apr 07, p. 2. View this memorandum at https://ca.dtic.mil/jcs/ngrm/tp/chu_prog_supportutil_memo_18apr07.pdf.

4. USD/PR supplemental memorandum Programs to Support Utilization of the Force, dated 24 May 07. View this memorandum at https://ca.dtic.mil/jcs/ngrm/tp/chu_prog_supportutil_memo_24may07.pdf.

Note: All these websites must be viewed from a ".mil" domain computer.