New U.S. Army Human Resources System Is the Change the Army and Its Soldiers Need

Col. Rebecca L. Eggers, U.S. Army

The Army is in the process of fielding an innovative, online human resources (HR) system for soldiers called the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army (IPPS-A). In March 2020, the Army completed IPPS-A fielding to the Army National Guard (ARNG). In September 2022, IPPS-A will integrate the Active and Reserve Components—bringing all 1.1 million soldiers online into a single system. In just two short years, IPPS-A has proven to be a comprehensive transformation in the way the ARNG carries out HR functions. The system provides increased visibility for commanders at all levels, streamlines workflows for HR professionals, and improves soldiers' pay accuracy and timeliness.

Out with the Old, In with the New

IPPS-A will provide modern personnel, pay, talent, and analytic capabilities in a single system to all Army components for the first time. Additionally, IPPS-A will provide enhanced decision-making and search-and-match capabilities to enable Army leaders to better manage the unique talents of individual soldiers across the Total Force. IPPS-A creates much needed transparency for soldiers. Lost promotion or leave packets will be a thing of the past. Soldiers will be able to track their personnel actions from submission through approval from their mobile devices.

For decades, the Army used over two hundred antiquated HR and pay systems with over 650 interface and data exchanges to handle its soldiers' administrative needs. The Army's industrial age HR processes were driven by pen-and-paper forms, as well as in-person appointments. IPPS-A modernizes Army HR by combining personnel and pay changes into a single digital transaction, allowing soldiers to see the status of those actions real-time from their mobile devices. Upon IPPS-A's full deployment, it will replace over thirty legacy systems and eliminate approximately three hundred interfaces.

IPPS-A Positively Impacts Soldier Pay

Because the Army's current personnel and pay processes require separate actions, soldiers are at risk of experiencing delayed pay or debt. For example, soldiers leaving the Army with unprocessed leave requests incur a debt to the Army through no fault of their own. Additionally, soldiers can often experience delays in charged leave while waiting for both transactions to be completed. Beginning in September, IPPS-A will automatically send pay transactions—eliminating the possibility of delay.

Delays in pay can also occur when a soldier gets promoted but the pay transaction is not completed in a timely fashion. Prior to IPPS-A's fielding to the ARNG, this often happened when new soldiers arrived at basic training. A soldier would arrive with a promotion order indicating his or her new rank and, upon arrival to training, that form would need to be processed by the local

Soldiers assigned to the 335th Signal Command attend an Army Integrated Personnel and Pay System (IPPS-A) class in Pinellas Park, Florida, on 2 May 2022. IPPS-A is the Army's online human resources (HR) solution to provide integrated HR capabilities across all Army components. (Photo by Sgt. Tarako Braswell, U.S. Army)

finance office to establish the soldier's pay record. IPPS-A automates this entire process. When a soldier is approved for promotion to the next rank by a commander, IPPS-A automatically sends the pay transaction to finance. Now, ARNG soldiers arriving to reception centers already have established pay records based on the pay transactions sent when their promotions were approved, and they get paid in accordance with their new rank upon arrival.

IPPS-A has streamlined several personnel and pay transactions for the ARNG while maintaining pay accuracy rates for those transactions of over 99 percent for over two years. And remarkably, in April 2022, IPPS-A accurately processed 100 percent of submitted transactions. This increased accuracy rate for pay transactions has a direct impact on soldiers. Release 3 will bring this enhanced pay reliability to the Total Force in September. Soldiers deserve accurate and timely pay for their commitment and dedication.

IPPS-A Quickly Adapts to Changing Policy

IPPS-A streamlines the process for transferring between deployments, assignments, and components—easing mobilization and demobilization actions. A key to this process is the method to start benefits such as TRICARE and the system's ability to adjust to changing requirements for soldiers. Most recently, in support of COVID-19 operations and to support civil unrest call-ups in multiple states, IPPS-A implemented rapid software updates to execute timely soldier pay and benefit transactions. These updates were required based on approved changes in benefits for soldiers mobilized to support these necessary operations. Additionally, IPPS-A's greatly improved capabilities allowed one state to cut its soldier readiness processing time in half. Yet another state leveraged IPPS-A's web-based capability to mobilize soldiers from several different locations simultaneously. And if assistance was needed, the integrated system allowed experts at every level to quickly assist remotely.

As the Army continues to mobilize units and soldiers in support of operations overseas, or in the event of a large-scale combat operation, IPPS-A's capabilities will be a combat multiplier that has proven its potential to rise to the occasion.

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IPPS-A Increases Visibility Across the Force

IPPS-A's integrated nature ensures a common operating picture at every level of the Army, unlike our current environment where different systems are used at the enterprise and the user levels. IPPS-A Release 2 allows the National Guard Bureau to see soldiers across the fifty-four states and territories without requiring aggregation from different systems. When the Army delivers Release 3 in September, Army senior leaders will have a complete view of total Army strength for the first time.

IPPS-A's talent management framework allows soldiers to upload knowledge, skills, and behaviors into their profile unrelated to their specialty and rank. Leaders at every level can then leverage this data to seek out soldiers with skill sets required to complete their units' unique missions. And for the first time, the Reserve Component will have the ability to see soldiers who are separating from the Active Component and coming to their state or location, allowing for targeted recruiting. Moreover, soldiers will have unprecedented mobile access to their personnel records. They will be able to securely submit HR requests and track their progress from start to finish. Additionally, soldiers will be able to view approvals and explanations, saving them a trip to the G-1/S-1 shop. Through the app, self-service transactions are automated, paper-free, and transparent.

What Can Users Expect from Release 3?

Release 3 will provide a foundation to facilitate the Army Talent Alignment Process across the force. IPPS-A will provide commanders, HR managers, and career managers visibility of the immense talent in their formations. For example, IPPS-A will be used to issue assignment orders and will initiate a Total Force Marketplace with talent management capabilities for all components and ranks. Commanders and other senior leaders will be able to view a soldier's full array of talents and abilities, thus providing leaders with a more comprehensive talent profile for everyone to help the Army make data-driven decisions when determining a soldier's next assignment. IPPS-A will empower soldiers, HR professionals, and leaders with the right tools to optimize contributions to Army readiness, thereby transforming the Army's industrial age personnel and pay systems into an integrated twenty-first-century talent management and data-driven human capital enterprise system.
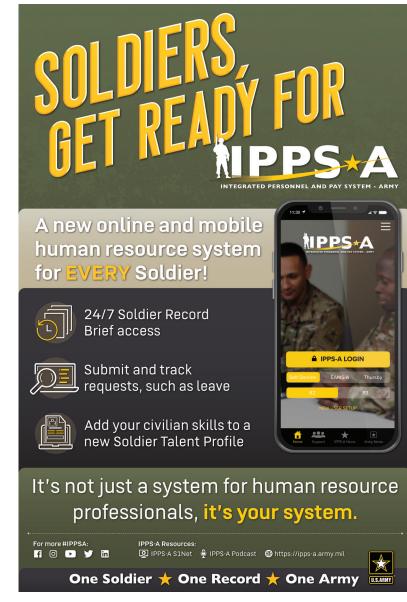
What Do Active and Reserve Soldiers Need to Do to Prepare?

The first step is data correctness: "PMCS Your Records." During Release 2, IPPS-A leadership realized the importance of having up-to-date personnel records prior to the implementation of the system. Any existing data inaccuracies or issues were transferred to IPPS-A during the ARNG deployment. IPPS-A's ongoing data correctness campaign is designed to identify and fix inconsistencies within every personnel record as active and reserve forces prepare for their conversion to IPPS-A. There are essential tasks for soldiers, units, and system owners to follow. Soldiers should review and coordinate with their S-1s to correct HR record errors in

the Defense Manpower Data Center, the Army Training Requirements Resources System, Soldier Record Briefs, the Digital Training Management System, and Leave and Earnings Statements.

The second step is to participate in essential training. Release 3 distance-learning training is available for all users. There are also many resources such as webinars, podcasts, HR and pay summits, videos, and user guides available on IPPS-A social media and S1Net. The IPPS-A team is using comprehensive role-based training to prepare HR professionals and leaders for operations in IPPS-A. It is critical that anyone performing and/or approving HR actions complete this mandatory training. IPPS-A utilizes the train-the-trainer model, which provides unit-level hands-on training and develops organizational subject-matter experts.

A Game Changer for the Army

IPPS-A is a game-changer for the Total Army and the largest HR enterprise resource planning system in the world. As the program progresses through Release 3, the IPPS-A team urges active and reserve soldiers to remember they must prepare—IPPS-A is coming, and this modernization is happening with the involvement and support of Army senior leaders. ∎

A promotional poster for the Release 3 of IPPS-A. (Graphic courtesy of IPPS-A)

For more information and resources on IPPS-A, visit our website at http://www.ipps-a.army.mil/. You can also follow IPPS-A on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram for constant updates.

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