



A Soldier from the 4th Sustainment Brigade salutes the American flag during a ceremony March 27, 2010, at Fort Hood, Texas. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Erick Ritterby)

Toolkit: Involuntary separations

By Jennifer Mattson

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As the Army draws down its force, approximately 20,000 NCOs will be subject to involuntary separation or discontinuation of service through fiscal year 2017.

AR 635-200, Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations, gives the Army the authority to initiate the involuntary separation of Soldiers as a result of reductions in force, strength limitations or budgetary constraints. In 2010, when the Army started to look at how to use that authority, the Army G-1 instituted the Qualitative Service Program and Qualitative Management Program.

The Qualitative Service Program applies to NCOs — from staff sergeants to sergeants major — in military occupational specialties that have been identified as being overstrength by the Army G-1 and ranks NCOs according to their potential. The Qualitative Management Program looks at NCOs across the Army and ranks them according to the Soldier's potential or capability to meet the Army's needs. All NCOs who are sergeants first class and above with 19 years of service are subject to the QMP.

NCOs who involuntarily separate under QMP will not be able to receive temporary early retirement or be allowed to return to active duty without a waiver. Also, they must leave no later than the first day of the seventh month following the board's decision.

Gerald Purcell, the Army G-1's personnel policy integrator, said the program will follow a board schedule in which staff sergeants are considered for QSP during the annual sergeant first class promotion board, sergeants first class are considered during the master sergeant board, master sergeants during the sergeant major training and selection board, and sergeants major during the nominative command sergeant major/command selection list promotion board.

"[The QSP] capitalizes on our existing centralized selection board process to assess Soldiers who are being considered for involuntary separation based on their potential for future contributions to the Army — just like a promotion board does," Purcell said. "This process targets skills that are excess requirements. Soldiers holding MOSs that are balanced or short are not going to be subject to this program."

NCOs will be notified before the board convenes that they are being considered for QSP. Once the board convenes, an official notification will be made to the Soldier's first general officer, then to the battalion commander.

"All of these Soldiers are fully qualified Soldiers who we would otherwise desire to keep," Purcell said. "However, as we shape the force to meet changing requirements, we recognize that many fantastic Soldiers will be identified for denial of continued service. We also recognize that we must do this as we shape the force in an effort to ensure we retain those NCOs who have the greatest potential for future contributions, retaining the highest levels of readiness and capability in an all-volunteer Army."

An NCO may appeal the board's decision, but only if he or she believes that his or her record contained material errors. An NCO who wishes to stay in the Army may also seek reclassification to a shortage MOS to fit the Army's needs. However, the NCO must have a course date that begins within the six months following the notification of separation under QSP.

"Making yourself more useful to the Army is always a good thing," Purcell said.

NCOs separated under QSP may apply for early retirement if they have at least 15 years of active federal service at the date of separation. However, these Soldiers can no longer transfer their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their dependents. If in the future, the Army needs the skills separated Soldiers have, they will be able to return to active duty. Soldiers will also have a minimum of 12 months from the board's decision to transition to civilian life. They must serve at least 90 days, by law, before they separate. In addition, the board's decision isn't made public.

"We're trying to do everything we can to recognize that they are quality people," Purcell said. "We really want to take care of them as they leave. We want to maximize their ability to take advantage of the transition assistance programs we have." ■

Board processes for separation

Involuntary, early separations are based on NCOs' current performance and their potential for future contributions to the Army. The policies are outlined in [AR 635-200, Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations](#).

- **QMP: Qualitative management program** — Focuses on senior NCOs (E-7 to E-9) who may be denied for continued service because of performance, conduct or potential for advancement that does not meet Army standards.
- **QSP: Overstrength Qualitative Service Program** — Looks at E-6 to E-9 NCOs for denial of continued service in select military occupational specialties where the 12-month operating strength projections exceed 100 percent. If otherwise qualified, NCOs may voluntarily reclassify into a shortage MOS.
- **QSP: Promotion stagnation Qualitative Service Program** — Board will consider E-6 to E-9 NCOs for discontinuation of service in select MOSs or skill levels where promotion stagnation is evident.

Criteria considered

Boards that decide whether a Soldier should be involuntarily separated use the same criteria that a promotion board looks at. The board develops an Order of Merit List and focuses on those at the bottom of the list to make a determination. Some items considered are:

- **Personnel qualification record:** The board reviews the NCO's personnel qualification record to determine range of assignments, military and civilian education, and additional training.
- **Official photograph** is used to judge a Soldier's appearance and to note awards, medals and badges.
- **Moral and ethical conduct:** The board considers whether a Soldier's conduct is incompatible or inconsistent with the Army's values or the values of the NCO Corps.
- **Efficiency and performance:** The board looks at whether the NCO is unable to perform NCO duties in his or her current grade or if there has been a decline noted in the NCO's NCO Evaluation Report, including failing NCO Education System courses, disciplinary problems or bars to re-enlistment.
- **Physical standards:** The board considers whether the NCO is able to maintain physical standards or comply with the Army body composition program.
- **Official Military Personnel File:** The board reviews the performance portion (P-fiche) of the Soldier's OMPF.



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