



Changes to Enlisted Separation Policy Aim to Provide Soldiers Options

By David Vergun

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Changes to the Enlisted Voluntary Early Separation Program and Enlisted Involuntary Early Separation Program took effect Jan. 1.

Voluntary Separation

The Enlisted Voluntary Early Separation Program is designed for Soldiers who have employment offers and want to discontinue their military career prior to the expiration of their term of service, or ETS. They can now request separation up to 180 days prior to their ETS.

Soldiers can request the separation through their local commanders, but they must show adequate salary or compensation from their potential civilian employers to prove the separation won't hurt their ability to support

their families, said James R. Bragg, branch chief for the Retention and Reclassification — Involuntary/Voluntary Separation program, Human Resources Command, at Fort Knox, Ky.

Bragg added that of that 180-day maximum period, a Soldier would need a minimum of 90 days for normal transition and separation processing.

The previous voluntary separation policy was designed for Soldiers planning to attend college. That policy, which remains in effect, allows Soldiers to separate up to 90 days early to begin their semester work, Bragg said.

The new policy allowing for early separation for a job opportunity can be "good for the Soldiers and their families" as they transition, Bragg said.

Further details of the changes can be found in All Army Activity message 340/2013.

Involuntary Separation

The Enlisted Involuntary Early Separation Program remains in effect for Soldiers whose term of service is set to expire during a deployment. In addition, the policy now covers Soldiers whose units are going to be deactivated, Bragg said.

Soldiers are offered the chance to re-enlist, extend their service or choose a different unit or military occupational specialty, Bragg said. If they don't, they are involuntarily separated up to one year before their ETS.

Soldiers in units that will be deactivated are given 45 days to extend or re-enlist from the time they're notified, Bragg continued. If the Soldier chooses not to extend or re-enlist, the Soldier's ETS may be reduced up to a year's time — depending on the date his or her unit is deactivating — but not less than 90 days for transition/separation processing.

The policy does not apply to units that are deactivat-

ing but then reactivating as a different unit at the same location. In that case, a Soldier would remain with the unit until his or her ETS date, Bragg added.

Although no Soldier has yet been affected by the change, Bragg said he expects there will be involuntary separations for those in units deactivating as the draw-down continues.

"We always give the Soldier the opportunity to stay with the team first," he said.

The policy for involuntary early separations can be found in All Army Activity message 339/2013 and Military Personnel 13-375.

Whether or not Soldiers choose the voluntary or involuntary separation route, they are afforded the opportunity to speak with a reserve-component career counselor to discuss possible positions in the National Guard or Army Reserve, said Col. Charles A Slaney, program manager for reserve component career counselors, HRC.

"We want to ensure all Soldiers are treated with dignity and respect, and that when they leave the service, they're ambassadors for the Army," he said. ■



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