



During a town hall meeting at the 13th SC(E) chapel Lt. Gen. Jeffery Talley addressed questions about active-duty Soldiers transitioning to the reserve component. (Photo by 1st Lt. Barry Stevenson)

# Pilot Program Eases NCOs Transition To Army Reserve

*By 1Lt. Barry Stevenson— 310th SC(E) Public Affairs*

**A**s the active-duty Army draws down on their numbers, there will be quality NCOs making adjustments to their career plans.

Last year, Fort Hood, Texas, was chosen to host a pilot program for Soldiers who have come within reach of their estimated time of separation window. This new program, Active Component to Reserve Component, allows Soldiers to explore opportunities to continue their military service with the National Guard or Army Reserve. Eligible Soldiers are allowed to sign a reserve-component contract as far out as 365 days from their estimated time of separation from active duty. Not to be confused with an early separa-

tion program, AC2RC allows Soldiers to be proactive rather than reactive when career changes are on the horizon.

Lt. Gen. Jeffery Talley, commanding general of United States Army Reserve Command, said he wants leaders coming off active duty to stay Soldiers for life.

“(In the Army Reserve) we’ll get great men and women who have, on average, a couple of combat tours under their belt, and they are strong leaders that will make our formations, and make our component and our command better,” he said. “The Army wins, the Army Reserve wins and America wins. It’s pretty easy to see why it’s so beneficial to do this.”

While visiting Fort Hood last week, Talley held a town hall with Reserve Soldiers to discuss the state of the Army Reserve and address any concerns the Soldiers had. One Soldier expressed concerns during the meeting about why the active component is drawing down.

“Some people have this perception that as the regular Army draws down and the Soldiers come into the reserve component — that they’re all leaving the regular Army because they’re being kicked out. That’s just not true,” Talley said. “It’s not just the Soldiers who are being asked to leave, it’s also Soldiers who are volunteering to leave because they’ve met their commitment requirements and they want to continue to be a Soldier for life, but also have a great civilian career. Well, that’s what we do in the Army Reserve.”

The Army Reserve is critically short mid-career Soldiers in the grades of sergeant, staff sergeant and sergeant first class.

As luck would have it, those qualifications match the majority of Soldiers interested in AC2RC. This program will do more than balance out the reserve formations, it will raise the quality of the force even higher than it already is with all of the knowledge these Soldiers will bring to the table. Not only do these Soldiers possess great leadership skills, but also many have combat experience.

There are a few challenges and benefits that AC2RC is helping to balance. Soldier readiness is always a critical factor when accepting new Soldiers into a unit and many of the Soldiers coming off active duty have combat-arms

skill sets. Therefore, if these MOSs are not available within the gaining reserve unit, then Soldiers can be re-trained before leaving active duty. This not only benefits the gaining unit in terms of readiness, but it also ensures that Soldiers don’t show up at their new civilian jobs, and immediately need time off for training. It is a win-win situation for all parties involved.

Talley also believes that this concept works well.

“What we can do is use our private-public partnership office to help pull them into a great civilian career that hopefully will correlate well to their new military occupational specialty,” he said. “It’s just a lot easier; it’s so much harder to (complete training) once they separate from the regular Army ... we don’t want to pile one more thing on and say, ‘Oh by the way, you need to start a civilian career, but the first thing you need to do is tell your new civilian boss you’re going to be gone for the next six months.’ That doesn’t sit well.”

As retention officers at Fort Hood continue to push the opportunity to retrain before switching to the reserve component, Talley will continue to promote this program and make sure that transitioning troops stay Soldiers for life.

“I’ve asked the secretary of the Army to approve taking the Fort Hood pilot program we’re doing, the AC2RC, and expanding it to Fort Bragg, North Carolina,” Talley said. “And who knows, maybe even expand it beyond Fort Bragg as we continue to try and capture the very best men and women coming out of the regular Army.” ■



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