

Bar to Continued Service Program will soon affect all ranks, not just re-enlistments

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Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey congratulates Sgt. Kevin LaRose on his re-enlistment during a ceremony May 18 on Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. The Bar to Re-enlistment program will become the Bar to Continued Service Program and will apply to Soldiers at all points in their careers. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Thomas Duval)

Changes to Army programs that are meant to retain quality noncommissioned officers will take effect when the new fiscal year begins on Oct. 1.

Back in May, Secretary of the Army Eric Fanning signed the Army Directive 2016-19 (Retaining a Quality Noncommissioned Officer Corps), instituting new policies that are meant to ensure the Army retains its best Soldiers while offering NCOs with the most potential an avenue for continued service.

The directive changes the Bar to Continued Service Program, the NCO Career Status Program, and Retention Control Point System. The changes will be felt across the enlisted spectrum, particularly among mid-career to senior-level NCOs.

Under the Bar to Continued Service program, formerly known as the Bar to Reenlistment Program, all enlisted ranks in the active and Reserve components can receive notice that they must improve their performance or face separation from service, despite having re-enlisted indefinitely.

"The big change ... is that the (Bar to Continued Service Program) now affects all enlisted ranks," said Sgt. Maj. Michael Kouneski, Fort Jackson's command career counselor. "Where previously (the program was) Bar to Re-enlistment and, if you were in the indefinite re-enlistment program, you could say, 'The commander can't bar me to re-enlist because I'm already indefinite.' Now if a Soldier has unsatisfactory performance, the commander can bar you from continued service."

The bar will be reviewed at periods of three and six months before separation procedures begin.

"(The reviews) are putting you on notice you are a candidate for separation under the new Bar to Continued Service," Kouneski said. "As a

Soldier in the Army you (must) ... continue to find new ways to better yourself, because as the Army reduces in size it naturally becomes more competitive."

Under the new directive, Soldiers who wish to re-enlist under the NCO Career Status Program, formerly the Indefinite Re-enlistment Program, must wait until their 12th year of service to apply. The new entry point is meant to coincide with the Army's new retirement system, which begins Jan. 1, 2018.

The directive also reduces the years senior NCOs can stay in the Army by reducing Retention Control Point levels for sergeants first class, master and first sergeants, and sergeants major.

This change, which will take place over a three-year period, is designed to cause "senior enlisted personnel to exit earlier than anticipated and to mitigate the effects on families and on the Army."

Soldiers seeking more information on these upcoming changes should contact their unit career counselors.