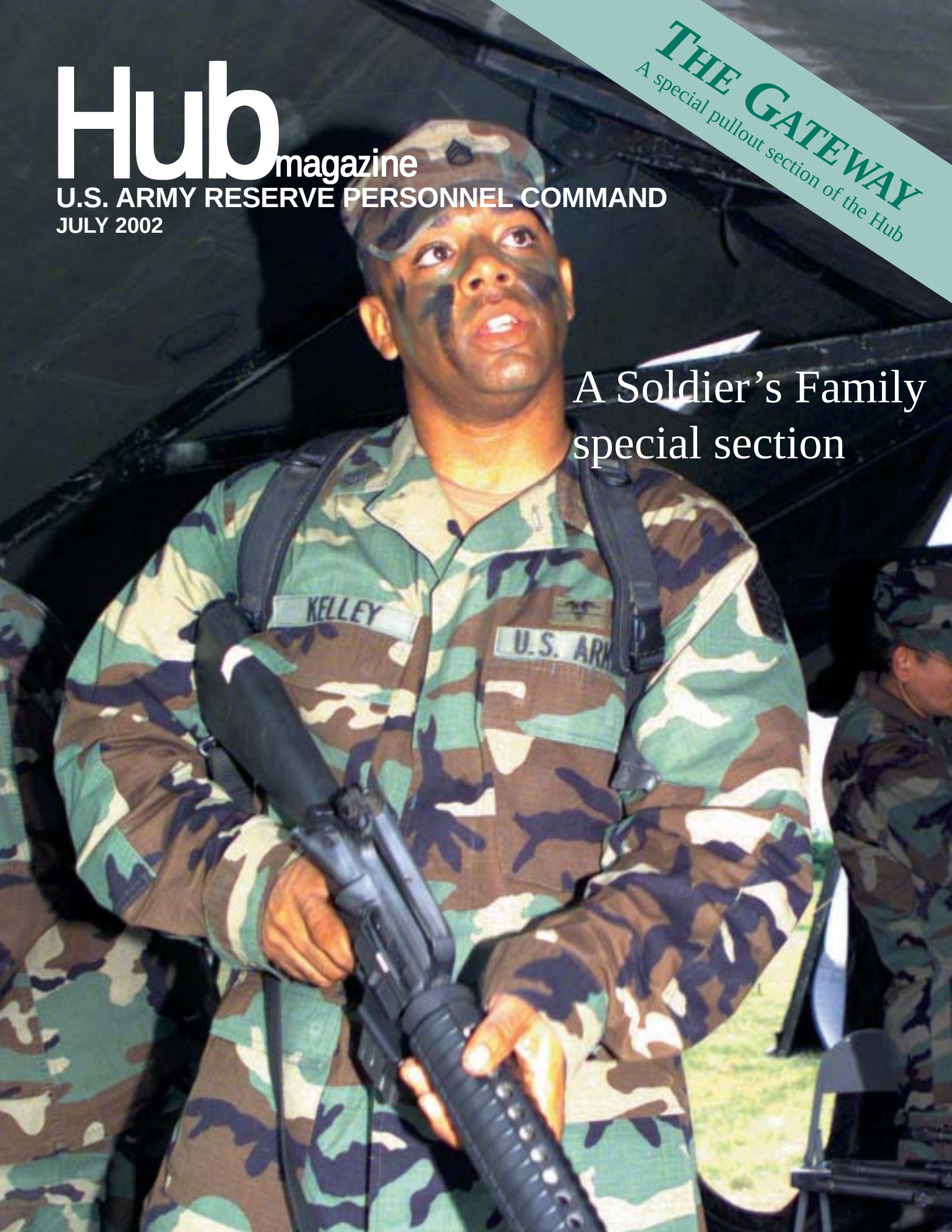
Hub magazine

U.S. ARMY RESERVE PERSONNEL COMMAND
JULY 2002

THE GATEWAY
A special pullout section of the Hub



A Soldier's Family special section

Hub

Vol. 32, No. 9

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On the cover: Staff Sgt. Danyell Kelley of AR-PERSCOM 's Health Services Personnel Management Directorate listens to instructions for operating an M-16A2 rifle during the Common Task Test conducted by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, AR-PERSCOM, in June. Photo by Master Sgt. Brian Kappmeyer.

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COMMANDER'S CALL

COL. ELTON C. BRUCE

CCO employees work hard for you

I am very pleased with the way our Customer Contact Office serves you, our customers. You could say the Customer Contact Office is the front door of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM. Even the welcome mat says "Service."

As a primary proponent and first point of contact for many of the customers of this command, CCO is wealth of general information poised to connect your questions to answers. Let me take this opportunity to focus on the great things that the Customer Contact Office does for you.

CCO was conceived to enable the command to provide a more concentrated effort to the specific and often specialized needs of the reserve soldiers, retirees and or family members being served. By becoming a first-line information source and redirecting misrouted inquiries, CCO contact representatives enable many functional areas of this command to increase their productivity and increase the amount of uninterrupted time they have to research and process your personnel actions.

The overall command has benefited by receiving 40 percent fewer interruptions, thereby enhancing the quality of service you receive.

The Soldier Management System, or SMS, is a command-wide customer-contact and case-management tool used extensively in CCO. This system has proven essential in providing customers with accurate, historical and up-to-date information on the status of their inquiries. Also, with the creation of 2xCitizen and My2xCitizen, we are able to guide the customer through the AR-PERSCOM web site to promote timesaving self-service options. Visit the web site at **www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil**

As the first and often only stop for many of the command's customers, CCO is a strong and sincere proponent for Customer Relations Management, commonly called CRM. CCO assists the command in developing business policy and processes to meet the needs of the soldiers we serve.

I think Elizabeth "Beth" Hamilton of CCO's Inquiry Management Team said it best when she said, "CCO and AR-PERSCOM live and breathe CRM."

Customer Relationship Management, or CRM, is customer service with a significant twist:

- establishing long-term relationships with our customers;
- knowing what customers need and providing it accurately and timely;
- identifying how customers differ; and
- identifying their respective criticality to mission accomplishment.

With the strong support of Information Support Activity-St. Louis, or ISA-St. Louis, CCO is able to utilize the best information technology available to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we provide. Coupled with a caring and technologically competent staff, CCO is armed to receive, assist and track every inquiry that enters our arena. CCO serves as both a support organization and as an honest broker for customer contact business issues helping to eliminate the black-hole factor.

The "three hinges" of AR-PERSCOM's open door of customer service are, the Special Inquiries Team, the Inquiry Management Team and the Customer Service Team. The integrated efforts of these three forces enable the command to receive, respond to, track and manage over 400,000 inquiries per year. This triumvirate of professional service providers strives to ensure each walk-in customer, phone call, mailed correspondence, facsimile or e-mail receives the honest and courteous answer you need and deserve.

The Special Inquiries Team serves as the command's liaison for VIP inquiries, and encompasses administration of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. "Team A" tasks, tracks and controls actions from the Army Review Boards to ensure command compliance with directed ARBA actions. Its members do the same for legal types of inquiries, which are usually time-sensitive. VIP inquiries also include correspondence originating from the White House; Office of the Chief, Army Reserve; general officers; Congress; and Office of the Chief Legislative Liaison as well as House and Senate liaison offices. This team also provides locator services for child-support enforcement cases.

The Inquiry Management Team handles routine and special project mail. A major goal of "Team B" is to move the command away from the idea that IMT is just a mailroom. In actuality, the

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FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

Command Sgt. Maj. Ray Hemingway

Use chain of command, NCO support channel to get the job done!

When we entered the Army, we were taught to use the chain of command and the NCO support channel. Well, quite frankly, we have soldiers who obviously have forgotten the rules of engagement when it comes to following the chain of command and their NCO support channel. The two are channels of communication used to pass information up and down in a unit. They are used to carry out the business processes of the unit.

Oftentimes, the processing of unit business and passing information require that issues be resolved, decisions be made, and so forth. Those decisions and issues should be made at the lowest level of the chain of command when possible and the NCO support channel. Soldiers get into trouble when they bypass a level of the chain of command and the NCO support channel. We must ensure that soldiers are reminded that the NCO channel supports the chain of command and the chain of command supports the NCO support channel.

Use chain of command, NCO support channel to get info where it's needed

We often spend a large amount of time talking about how to communicate and how we should communicate, but we fail miserably in executing communications. Information that is generated at the top level of leadership doesn't always get down to the lowest level that it needs, that is, to the last soldier in a squad. Soldiers often complain that they are not kept informed. Simply put, we do not ensure that the information we put out through the different levels of the chain of command gets to the lowest level. We must keep our soldiers informed at all times: They expect it!

Jumping the chain doesn't get you what you need

We learn about these valuable tools in basic training because they work! Using your chain or NCO support channel has these things going for it:

- It saves time in solving the problem.
- It alerts chain of command that there's a problem so your chain of command can be involved in finding a solution. (They can't help you if they don't know there's a problem.)
- If you use your local chain of command, you can get more support through local resources, such as the chaplain, Judge Advocate and so forth. Locally there may be more assets available to help the soldier with a problem. There may even be resources in your community.
- When you use your local support personnel who do it right the first time, you will help prevent the bottleneck that results if you go straight to the top. As for AR-PERSCOM, the more soldiers abuse it by going straight to our people instead of through local channels, the harder it is for this agency to work effectively for the soldiers out in the field.

Whatever the reason, some soldiers ignore the chain of command or the NCO support channel. They simply choose not to use it. I'm talking about an officer who corresponds directly with the chief of staff of the Army without going through his chain of command. I'm talking about an enlisted soldier who sends e-mail traffic to the sergeant major of the Army without going through his chain of command or NCO support channel. I'm also talking about an enlisted soldier who corresponds with the command sergeant major of the Army Reserve without going through the chain of command or the NCO support channel. I'm also talking about soldiers who call me about problems they are having in their units without trying to get them resolved through their chain of command or NCO support channel.

These cases are just a small number of abuses. Nevertheless, those soldiers who jump the chain should be held accountable for the improper utilization of the chain of command. I believe this is a trust issue between leadership and subordinates. Soldiers must be able to trust their leadership to help them resolve any problems they have, but if the first level of the chain can't help them, then they should go to the next level of their chain to get issues resolved. The system works for those soldiers who use the resources the Army has in place to resolve issues.

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FROM THE HHC COMMANDER

New HHC commander sums up his philosophy in one word, 'teamwork'

Maj. Mark Quartullo

Maj. Harald "Hal" Abbenhaus, the outgoing commander of AR-PERSCOM's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, leaves the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command in St. Louis for the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, commonly known as DANTES, in Pensacola, Fla. The change-of-command ceremony took place July 9. Maj. Mark Quartullo, formerly of the Plans Directorate, is the incoming HHC commander. Quartullo was in Mobilization Operations under Plans.

Through this column, I hope to provide new insights and information on things that matter. Occasionally, I will pass along a few historical anecdotes and words of wisdom that demonstrate important lessons in leadership, soldiering and life: We can learn a great deal about the present from the past. As President Harry Truman once remarked, "The only thing new in the world is the history you don't know."

You might not think of it this way, but every time a commander puts pen to paper to write a column like this, he is exercising the command responsibilities given to him: He is addressing matters that affect his soldiers. Given the importance of this, you have the right to know exactly who is responsible for ensuring the health, morale, welfare and discipline of all HHC soldiers.

My command philosophy is a simple one: I will endeavor to always lead with enthusiasm and by example.

Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage: These are the Army values. It's not by accident that their initials spell LDRSHIP.

They represent the cornerstone of the good character and responsible action that all leaders and individuals must have to be credible and effective.

Although all of them are important, I am particularly partial to "selfless service." President Ronald Reagan once said: "There is no limit to what a man can do, or where he can go, if he doesn't mind who gets the credit." I believe this represents the kind of selfless devotion to duty a leader must exercise to effectively lead and obtain the best possible results.

Leadership is not about self-aggrandizement or personal benefit, but ensuring that the right thing is done and that soldiers are taken care of always.

While "command leadership" is extremely important in ensuring mission success, it is by no means the full story. The true story of any leader lies in the efforts of that leader's subordinates.

Much has been made of the current Army slogan: "An Army Of One." For many, it appears to be a statement of personal empowerment in which individuals can grow through military education and duty. For me, however, it means something different. It represents the unity of people and their efforts, striving to create a single functional entity (with our many capabilities) in the service of our national imperatives and the American people. It is only together — contributing our own special, individual abilities — that we can create an effective "Army of One."

I believe this sentiment applies to every unit or organization in the Army — to include, of course, AR-PERSCOM. Only by working together can we ensure and improve the service to our soldiers and organization. While the HHC commander has a prescribed importance in the area of leadership, it will be the individuals around him that will ultimately ensure the success of our operations.

1st Sgt. Tracy Barlogio, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Taylor, Staff Sgt. Wachiraporn Tweedy, Sgt. Roddrick Tumlin and Sgt. Travlia Moseley have served HHC with the highest standards of professionalism and technical competence, ensuring quality personnel services for our soldiers.

The efforts of our many organizations and directorates at AR-PERSCOM— including yours — have aided us in many of our tasks as well. It stands to reason that only through our continued efforts will the aims and objectives of the AR-PERSCOM commander — and those of the HHC commander — be realized. I will be one part of "An Army of One," striving to justify the faith our commander and soldiers have placed in me. Yet, it will only be through our collective effort — through our *teamwork* — that we will "get results."

So now you know where I stand on things. Now, together, let's get to work.

Chaplain (Col.) James Welch

‘Eagles don’t flock’ or do they, friends?

The July issue of *National Geographic* magazine has a pictorial essay on the bald eagle in its natural habitat of Alaska.

On one of the pages, there is a picture of a gathering, or “convention,” of eagles. About 150 eagles are gathered together on the rocks of a mountainside. The brief description said that when this many eagles gather they become rather gregarious — tending to live in a flock, herd or community rather than alone.

That picture of the eagle “convention” really threw my understanding of eagles into a tailspin. I always thought that eagles were solitary. Even the statement with the framed picture I have in my office says: *“Eagles don’t flock — you find them one at a time.”* So, which will it be: part of a “convention” — a flock, a herd, a community — or living a solitary existence?

As much as I admire the bald eagle — with all its beauty, strength and power as well as its leading basically a solitary life, — I believe that men and women as part of God’s creation need other people in order to survive. As with the eagle, there should be a balance between a solitary life and one of “convention.”

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, “The Church is the Church only when it exists for others.”

Definitions of the church differ from denomination to denomination, from person to person and even from an understanding in one book of the Bible to another.

Each of us struggles to decide whether the church is meant to comfort us, sustain us, help us through the dark and difficult days, or whether it is meant to afflict the comfortable, challenge us to reach beyond our grasp, reach out to the poor, the outcast, the down and out of the community or the world.

This is indeed a paradox. Our religious home is to be both a comfort and a challenge, a safe shelter and on the cutting edge, a caring and compassionate center of ministry and a place where God’s plan is plainly uttered and a place where we can go when we feel we are alienated or separated from God.

I belong to a religious denomination that is connectional in nature. That means that the hurt and pain — even in far away places is — our concern. It means that the truth of the Scriptures is applicable in all places, not just in tall-steeple churches and academic classrooms. In that covenant community of ministry, it means that when one is hurting all are hurting.

The *National Geographic* picture of the “convention” of eagles shows that eagles exist for others. Some of the other pictures in the essay showed eagles in their aeries, fighting for the same pieces of food and sitting in trees viewing their world.

Just because we exist for others, it doesn’t mean that we are to be pushed around, that our rights and privileges are to be ignored, or that we do not stand up for what we think, feel and believe. If we exist for others, though, it certainly begins in the “convention,” the community, the church. We are called to be sent forth, not to go into retreat.

Gen. Charles C. Krulak, a former commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, spoke to a group of high school students from North Carolina Jan. 29, 1999. He concluded his remarks by reciting a poem (found in the David Edwards book, “One Step Closer”),

The Eagle and the Wolf

The Eagle And the Wolf
There is a great battle that rages inside me.
One side is the soaring eagle
Everything the eagle stands for is good and true and beautiful.
It soars above the clouds.
Even though it dips down into the valleys, it lays its eggs on the mountaintop.
The other side of me is a howling wolf.
And that raging, howling wolf represents the worst that is in me.
He eats upon my downfalls and justifies himself by his presence in the pack.
Who wins this great battle? …
The one I feed.

This pictorial gave me a chance to review the sides of my life: one solitary — doing things on my own; the other as part of a “convention,” a group, a community — working together to achieve common goals. These images are very powerful. Can you choose which one is best?

THE GATEWAY

Information for the USAR Full-Time Support Community

A special pullout section of the Hub

USARC to get new deputy CG

Maj. Gen. Charles E. Wilson was selected in April to become the deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Reserve Command, according to Army News Service.

Wilson is currently the commanding general of the U.S. Army Reserve 98th Division (Institutional Training) in Rochester, N.Y. He will succeed Maj. Gen. Craig Bambrough as the USARC deputy commander at the beginning of September.

Wilson, who was born in Atlanta and raised in Detroit, began his military service when he was drafted in 1966. Following his initial assignment at Ford Ord, Calif., he was deployed to the Republic of Vietnam in 1969. He is qualified as both a transportation officer and military police officer.

In civilian life, Wilson worked almost 27 years with the Detroit Police Department, serving in every rank from patrolman to assistant chief of police within the 5,000-member department. He retired as the Detroit chief of police in December.

In related news, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly became the USARC commander and chief of the Army Reserve May 25. He succeeds Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Plewes, who had been the CAR since May 25, 1998.

Maj. Gen. Charles E. Wilson, the commanding general of the 98th Division (Institutional Training) at Rochester, N.Y., takes a few moments with the 98th Division Honor Guard at the CG's Commanders Conference recently. In August, Wilson leaves the division for his new job as deputy commanding general at the U.S. Army Reserve Command, or USARC. From left to right is Master Sgt. Bing Reeves, Staff Sgt. Stephen David, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Snell, Wilson, Staff Sgt. Woodrow Strothers, Staff Sgt. Yvonne Robinson and Staff Sgt. Terrance Caselberry. This honor guard epitomizes the concept of The Army – soldiers of different types coming together to accomplish a mission: Reeves, David, Wilson and Strothers are troop program unit, or TPU, soldiers; Snell, Robinson and Caselberry are Active Guard Reserve, or AGR, soldiers. Robinson was once a soldier at the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM, in the Command Judge Advocate Office. The members of the 98th Div Honor Guard were also invited to present the colors to the Senate April 18, but funding was not available to send them.

New USARC CSM was once ARPERCEN CSM

Command Sgt. Maj. Nicholas A. Piacentini Jr. became the USARC command sergeant major during a change-of-position ceremony June 27 at Hedekin Field located at Fort McPherson, Ga., according to a U.S. Army Reserve Command news release.

He succeeds Command Sgt. Maj. Frank L. Spangler who has held the position at the U.S. Army Reserve Command since August 1998. Piacentini was previously assigned as the installation command sergeant major at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Piacentini served as the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Center, or ARPERCEN, in St. Louis, from June 1994 to May 1998. ARPERCEN is the predecessor of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM.

As USARC CSM, Piacentini will be the senior non-commissioned officer serving as an adviser and liaison for the USARC commander on all enlisted personnel matters.

Sgt. Maj. M. Knepper

From the sergeant major

Look to retirement

The theme of the Gateway this month is retirement: Something that was once a distant goal for me has arrived with alarming suddenness. We have lots of articles on the process for requesting retirement, but I want to talk to you seriously about retirement preparedness.

When I first joined the Active Guard Reserve, or AGR, program and reported to Fort Devens, Mass., in 1982, I had a notion that a retirement would be a good thing to achieve out of what was called a program at the time. In those days the purpose of the program was not to provide a Reserve soldier with a career or a retirement with 20 years or more of active federal service. I knew it was possible, but I wasn't even sure that I wanted to re-enlist at the end of my first tour, let alone stay for 15 more years.

Fortunately for me the AGR program developed into a career program, and I am eligible to retire now. I am grateful for all the opportunities I have had to serve in various places and for all the great soldiers with whom I have been privileged to serve.

When I started out, I had a young family (my children are now grown and have moved away) and I didn't really give much thought to what it would take to retire. I was too busy "squandering" my pay on food, heat and clothing.

No one encouraged me to think about what it would take to retire, either. Officers got together and talked about investing as part of officer professional development, or OPD, but enlisted professional development didn't ever mention such a subject.

In spite of my ignorance, I have managed to make some investments and with my retired pay, I look to be fairly comfortable in the coming years. I was well into my second assignment when the FTSMC sergeant major helped me not to miss the boat entirely. He brought me into his office, handed me a savings bond allotment form and said he thought it was a good way to get started, if I wasn't saving anything regularly (which I wasn't).

"Pay yourself first," he said. "You'll never miss it, and you'll never regret it." Well, I was doubtful: I was trying to keep two households afloat and money was extremely tight for me, but I did take out an allotment. And he was right. Those savings bonds (and other sorts of savings that I added to it as the years went by) have just allowed me to close on my retirement house.

"I didn't really give much thought to what it would take to retire. I was too busy 'squandering' my pay on food, heat and clothing."

You young soldiers have a gift and an opportunity now. What you have is time and it truly is a powerful gift. Would you like to have a million dollars when you retire? At 25, your investment of $100 per month can easily grow to a million by the time you are 65. It can still be done at age 50, but then it will take $5,000 per month to net that million.

Will a million dollars in 40 years be worth what a million dollars is today? Of course not, but it will be a whole lot more than nothing, no matter what it is worth in 2002 dollars.

There are a couple of easy, safe options for beginners: savings bonds and the Thrift Savings Plan. Neither one is particularly exciting, but in both cases your money enjoys tax advantages and is safe. *(See pages 22 and 23 to find out more.)*

I don't have the space here to outline advantages and disadvantages for individual cases. What I recommend is that you get online and explore the options and advantages of these plans.

Start with our web site **https://www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil/** and look at all the information on retirement. Search for TSP and read what information we have. *(There is also an article on TSP in the Hub's A Soldier's Family section and one on page 18.)* Also, do a search for U.S. savings bonds on the Internet and research them as well.

There is a wealth of information available. You have to do your research, and you have to make your own decision.

If you are young and really don't know what to do for sure, save something! Time is on your side, if you do something, and you will be developing a valuable habit. And, if you are not so young, don't despair: It is never too late to help yourself.

Happy retirement!

From the eagle's nest

Attention, all AGR soldiers!

Col. Barry Gallagher

"After hearing Helmly's remarks, I can assure you that he is 'fired up' and ready for the challenges that he will face as the leader of the best Army Reserve force in the world!"

Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, the new Chief, Army Reserve, visited AR-PERSCOM June 7 and spent over two hours with the senior staff at the Full Time Support Management Directorate, or FTSMD.

Helmly received a briefing on the current state of the Active Guard Reserve, or AGR, Program and then gave his guidance on how he expects the program to be managed during his tenure. Helmly also took time from his busy schedule to address all soldiers and civilians in FTSMD to thank them for their hard work and clarify what he expects from everyone who supports the AGR soldiers in the field.

Helmly's remarks apply to all soldiers in the AGR program as well as everyone in FTSMD who helps manage and administer the CAR's $970 million investment in readiness called the AGR program.

Helmly stated that his long-term vision for Army Reserve units and soldiers calls for a transition away from administrative-type functions and more toward our core competencies. For example, instead of a personnel NCO working in an Force Support Package, or FSP, Chemical Company, there would be a chemical operations NCO working to improve readiness while the military technician would handle unit administration and personnel responsibilities.

Helmly sees these changes as being necessary if the USAR is to remain relevant and capitalize on its core competencies. Only in this way, will we remain a valued part of the Army team and an effective force that serves our nation with professionalism and distinction!

Helmly concluded by stating that his primary loyalty is to the institution (read Army) and his second one is to the soldiers who serve the Army. After hearing Helmly's remarks, I can assure you that he is "fired up" and ready for the challenges that he will face as the leader of the best Army Reserve force in the world!

He is totally committed to training soldiers and ensuring that everyone is ready when called upon. My advice to you is "get ready" and get those updated photographs to your personnel managers/records NCOs as quickly as you can!

Here are the highlights from the general's remarks:

1. Remember – we are at war and the Army is also transforming.

2. We are in a "people-centric" business.

3. FTSMD must maintain the integrity of the institution (i.e., Army/Army Reserve)

4. FTSMD does not "hire" AGR soldiers, it "accesses them into an active-duty status to serve commanders and improve unit readiness."

5. FTSMD should not tolerate soldiers who attempt to manipulate the system.

6. FTSMD must place AGR soldiers in positions where they have a reasonable chance to succeed. Do not assign soldiers to positions for which they are not qualified just because they want to be in a specific geographic area.

7. Personnel managers will not make "deals" with soldiers and circumvent the current rules and regulations regarding time on station, or TOS, and permanent change of station, or PCS, moves.

8. Record managers will uphold the integrity of the Army records system by not changing any data field without proper documentation.

9. All AGR soldiers must provide FTSMD a current photo (within five years at current grade.)

10. Only soldiers whose personal circumstances meet the criteria for compassionate reassignment and enrollment in the Exceptional Family Member Program will be moved for those reasons (Army Regulation 140-30, AR 608-75, AR 614-200, and DA Pam 600-8).

Second Army Reserve AGR Officers AFS Extension Board results will be released soon

A list of those officers extended will be on the AR-PERSCOM web site, 'Twice the citizen'

by Lt. Col. Randy Pullen
Public Affairs and Liaison Directorate
Office of the Chief, Army Reserve

WASHINGTON (June 27, 2002) — The chief of the Army Reserve will soon release the results of a board conducted to consider eligible AGR officers for extension beyond 20 years of active federal service, or AFS.

This was the second Active Federal Service Extension Board to be conducted. It was held June 17 to 20 at the Department of the Army Secretariat (Reserve Component) in St. Louis.

The Active Guard Reserve AFS Extension Board made selections of the "best qualified" officers, based on the needs of the Army Reserve AGR Program. The board established a list of officers recommended for extension from those AGR officers who were eligible — those between 18 and 19 years of AFS as of June 1, 2002 — and who applied for board consideration.

Once Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly approves the board results, officer extensions will be executed by the Full Time Support Management Directorate, or FTSMD, of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command in St. Louis who will directly notify each AGR officer. Commands will receive an advance roster prior to the release date. A list of those officers extended will be on the AR-PERSCOM web site **www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil** after the results are approved.

By extending AGR officers beyond 20 years AFS, the Army Reserve will be able to take advantage of the talents and experience of officers who until now, for the most part, have had to leave the AGR program upon reaching 20 years AFS. Members of the AGR Program and other full-time support soldiers and civilians are essential to the Army Reserve's ability to maintain its current high readiness levels and to increasing those levels even more.

ERRATUM

AFS Extension Board info incorrect in April Hub's Gateway

The 2002 AFS Extension Board Announcement in the Gateway insert of the April Hub contains some erroneous information in paragraph 3, according to Tina Zucol, a military personnel management specialist at AR-PERSCOM's USAR Boards Support Branch.

It originally appeared as:

"Once an officer is selected for extension and the CAR approves the board's recommendation, their mandatory removal date (MRD) will be changed to reflect the new date."

The correct information is:

"Once an officer is selected for extension and the chief of the Army Reserve approves the board's recommendation, the soldier's retirement/release from active duty date, or RRD, will be changed to reflect the new date."

The Gateway

A special pullout section of the Hub

Summer 2002

Story coordinator
Lt. Col. Norma Nixon
Full Time Support
Management Directorate
AR-PERSCOM

This insert provides information of an advisory and informative nature concerning USAR full-time support and is distributed to all AGR and military technician personnel as well as to the employees of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM. This insert is governed by Army Regulation 25-30.

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AFS vs. MRD: There *is* a difference

by Lt. Col. Bob Marsh
Chief, Senior AGR Management Office

Often misunderstood and frequently confused is the difference between active federal service, or AFS, policy and the mandatory removal date, or MRD, statute. The two are often misused in correspondence and conversation. It's important to know the difference between these two separate dates, why Active Guard Reservists can or cannot continue to serve past them, and the processes for requesting continuation or extension if authorized.

To begin, the 20-year AFS policy is exactly that – it is a policy. Generally, exceptions and waivers to policies and regulations may be obtained through formal requests to the proponent of the policy. Army regulations normally outline procedures for requests in the front of the regulation or may state that no exceptions to a particular policy or regulation are authorized.

Under the provisions of Army Regulation 600-8-24, Officer Transfers and Discharges, July 1995, for all reserve commissioned officers, and more specifically for AGRs under AR 135-18, The Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Program effective June 19, 1996 (electronic version), chapter 4-12: All AGR officer personnel will be released from active duty or full-time National Guard duty when they have attained 20 years and one month of active federal service.

Extensions to serve beyond 20 years AFS are possible. The Chief, Army Reserve, or CAR, and the Chief, National Guard Bureau, have authority delegated to them by the assistant secretary of the army (manpower and reserve affairs) to extend officers past 20 years up to 24 years of AFS. This authority is temporary and expires Aug. 1, 2002, and unless the authority is extended, it may go back to the original extension authority which allows them to extend to 22 years AFS.

Presently, the Army Reserve uses a board process initiated in 2001 to determine which AGR officers are best qualified for continued service beyond 20 years. This board is a tool the CAR uses to make final determinations on AFS extensions. The biggest factor in making this determination is whether or not certain branches and functional areas are going to be short-handed in the out-years.

Numbers are determined, checked and checked again by ARPERSCOM's Personnel Proponency Office in St. Louis to determine exactly what specialties and skills are essential to the Army Reserve mission in the future. Officers are boarded at their 18th year of service for possible retention to their 22nd year. Provided the current policy is extended beyond Aug. 1, they are then boarded again at their 20th year for possible retention to their 24th year.

The MRD is not a policy, it is the law. Unlike policies and regulations and unless specifically written into the statute, waivers and exceptions are not permitted to law. Therefore, the Chief, Army Reserve, does not have the authority to extend this date. Section 14507, Title 10, United States Code, directs reserve lieutenant colonels and colonels to be released from active duty, for *maximum years of service*, upon completion of 28 and 30 years' commissioned service respectively. This is consecutive years from the date of commissioning; it does not consider qualifying years or active federal service years. The MRD for *age* is at 60 years with no consideration given to years served.

There is a separate section of Title 10 that allows chaplains and officers in medical specialties to remain longer. Those medical specialties include doctors, dentists, veterinarians, optometrists, nurses, and biomedical science officers within the Medical Service Corps. If you belong to one of these categories, your personnel management officer should be able to answer any questions you have.

What happens if AGR soldiers have over 18 years AFS but less than 20 and they hit their MRD, does the 18-year "lock-in" apply to them as AGRs? Yes, it does. Under the provisions of Section 12686, Title 10, USC, as an AGR officer, you are protected by the "sanctuary" law, which is what we commonly refer to as the 18-year lock-in. This states the only person who can involuntarily release an officer from active duty without the officer's consent is the secretary of the Army.

If AGR soldiers have over 18 years AFS but less than 20 and they hit their MRD, they would be allowed to complete their 20 years of AFS, and the MRD would then become the same date as our 20th AFS anniversary. Also in this particular scenario, no AFS extension requests would be entertained. Consequently, if they hit their MRD prior to reaching their 18-year "lock-in" point, they must be released from active duty. If they have 20 qualifying years of service by that time, they are then eligible for a non-regular retirement upon reaching age 60.

A continuation beyond MRD is not a simple approval or disapproval decision. The official language of Section 14701, Title 10, USC, is *continuation* beyond MRD as opposed to our more common reference of MRD extension. In order to selectively continue officers past their MRD, the secretary of the Army must first determine there is a shortage in a particular grade and area of concentration, or AOC, across the "Reserve of the Army;" Reserve of the Army includes both the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard.

Once the secretary of the Army has made this determination, a formal Department of the Army board would be convened to review *all* files of officers of the two components meeting the criteria with no regard to the officer's status, i.e., troop program unit, or TPU; individual mobilization augmentee, or IMA; Individual Ready Reserve, or IRR; M-Day (National Guard); or AGR. The board would then determine which officers are to be offered a continuation beyond their MRD.

If an officer requests an MRD continuation, will it be favorably considered? Most likely, it will not. Continuation beyond MRD is not an individual action; it is truly a needs-of-the-service action. A 1997 memorandum signed by then Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Sara Lister, delegates the authority to return individual requests for MRD continuation without action to the Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. The HQDA ODCSPER (now the G-1) further delegated that authority to the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard because of the unnecessary workload that individual requests were creating.

What retired pay plan are you under?

To find out more about your retired pay and the plan you fall under,

There are three retired pay plans for computing length-of-service retired pay. The "date of initial entry into military service," also called the DIEMS date, determines the plan that covers you. The DIEMS date isn't used to calculate your retired pay. Retired pay is calculated using your basic active service date, or BASD, and pay entry basic date, or PEBD.

A DIEMS date is the earliest date of enlistment, induction or appointment in a regular or Reserve component of a uniformed service as a commissioned officer, warrant officer, or enlisted member. It is rarely the same as the BASD and often earlier than the PEBD. Situations where the DIEMS date will be earlier then the PEBD include:

N U.S. Military Academy (West Point) graduate – The DIEMS date is the date the soldier entered the academy, or the date the soldier signed up for any active or Reserve service before entering the academy.

N ROTC – The DIEMS date is the earliest of: 1) the date the soldier began a ROTC scholarship program, 2) the date the soldier enlisted as a Reserve officer in the Senior ROTC program, or 3) the date the soldier signed up for any active or Reserve service before entering the ROTC program.

N Break in service – The DIEMS date is the date the soldier initially became a member of a uniformed service, any branch or component, even if the soldier had a break in service and re-entered at a later date.

N Delayed Entry Program, or DEP – The DIEMS date is the date the soldier signed up for the Delayed Entry Program, not the date the soldier came on active duty.

N Direct Commissioning Program, or DCP – Use the date the soldier signed the Oath of Office.

If the DIEMS date listed on your leave-and-earnings statement, or LES, is not correct, contact your personnel office. Personnelists will submit a transaction to correct it.

Service creditable for percentage purposes - All three retired pay plans use "service creditable for percentage purposes" in their formulas. In addition to percentage credit for your active duty service, you may receive percentage credit for certain inactive Reserve points and, for officers, medical or dental school. Before receiving credit for the additional time, you must first qualify for retirement by completing 20 years of active duty. For a complete explanation of service creditable for percentage purposes, see paragraph 0103 of DOD 7000.14-R. Medical and dental officers must also read paragraph 010202 of DOD 7000.14-R.

Service for basic pay purposes: All three retired pay plans give you a percentage of a "basic pay base." You do not receive a percentage of other compensation such as housing allowance, subsistence allowance, or federal tax advantages. This can make a significant difference in dollar amounts when computing your potential retired pay. The basic pay base for those with DIEMS dates before Sept. 8, 1980, is the final basic pay. In most cases, the basic pay base for those with DIEMS dates on or after Sept. 8, 1980, is the average of their highest 36 months of basic pay, referred to as "High-3."

The three retired pay plans are:

DIEMS before Sept. 8, 1980
(7.2 percent of the force)
Final Basic Pay Plan

Number of years of service creditable for percentage purposes
x 2.5 percent (that product cannot to exceed 75 percent)
x final basic pay
= Retired pay

These soldiers receive a percentage of their final basic pay; therefore, they should take care not to retire just before an increase in their basic pay, such as those applied at the 20-, 22-, 24- or 26-year points.

Officers who retire under the Final Basic Pay plan with less than 10 years of commissioned service retire in their highest enlisted or warrant officer grade. They receive a percentage of the final basic pay that corresponds to the retired grade and years of service at retirement.

Officers who have 10 years of commissioned service, but who retire before completing the required time in their current officer grade without an approved waiver, will retire at the next lower grade and receive a percentage of the final basic pay that corresponds to the lower grade and years of service at retirement.

Soldiers under the Final Basic Pay plan, who retire on the same day as a basic pay rate change (e.g., retire Jan. 1 with last day of active duty on Dec. 31; or July 1 with last day of active duty on June 30), may be eligible to have their retired pay calculated on the new pay scale.

Officers who retire voluntarily use the new pay scale as long as they qualify for retirement at least one day before their retirement date. Enlisted soldiers use the new pay scale.

Warrant officers can't use the new pay scale. See paragraph 0104 of DOD 7000-14.R for details on mandatory and disability retirements.

If your DIEMS date is before Sept. 8, 1980, you will receive an annual cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, representing the difference between the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, for the third quarter of one calendar year to the third quarter of the next. The COLA is normally effective Dec. 1 and payable the first working day in January.

The first COLA will be a partial one because you will not have been retired for the full COLA calculation period. Thereafter, you will receive a full COLA.

There are three plans and an option

visit **http://militarypay.dtic.mil** and **http://www.odcsper.army.mil**

DIEMS between Sept. 8, 1980, and July 31, 1986
(15.19 percent of the force)
High-3 Pay Plan

Number of years of service creditable for percentage purposes
x 2.5 percent (that product cannot to exceed 75 percent)
x average of highest 36 months of basic pay
= Retired pay

In most cases (see exceptions later), under the High-3 formula, the basic pay base is the average of the monthly basic pay rates you received for the 36 months just before your retirement.

Commissioned officers who were formerly enlisted, who retire with less than 10 years of commissioned service and less than 30 years of total service, will use only enlisted basic pay in the calculation of their highest 36 months of basic pay (Section 1407, Title 10 USC).

The enlisted basic pay corresponding to the member's years of service for the 36 months before retirement will be used.

Commissioned warrant officer time may be used to meet the 10-year commissioned service requirement.

Commissioned officers under the High-3 formula who retire with 10 or more years of commissioned service, but who fail to serve the required time to retire in their current grade, will retire at the next lower grade. However, both the officer and enlisted basic pay for the 36 months before retirement will be used to compute the average of the highest 36 months of basic pay.

If you serve on active duty for less than 36 months (e.g., disability retirement), the basic pay base is the amount of monthly basic pay you received during the period you were on active duty divided by the number of months, including any fraction, that you served on active duty.

For more information on calculating the average of the highest 36 months of basic pay, see paragraph 0301 of DOD 7000.14-R.

COLA – If your DIEMS date is between Sept. 8, 1980, and July 31, 1986, you will receive an annual cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, representing the difference between the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, for the third quarter of one calendar year to the third quarter of the next.

The cost-of-living adjustment is normally effective Dec. 1 and payable the first working day in January.

The first cost-of-living adjustment will be a partial one because you will not have been retired for the full COLA calculation period. Thereafter, you will receive the full cost-of-living adjustment.

DIEMS on or after Aug. 1, 1986
(77.61 percent of the force)
HIGH-3 or CSB/REDUX

If you are in this group, you are automatically covered under the High-3 formula discussed earlier.

However, between your 14th-and-a-half and 15th year of active duty, you may be given an opportunity to elect to have your retired pay calculated under the REDUX formula discussed when you read farther.

If you choose the REDUX formula, you receive a $30,000 career status bonus (CSB), payable immediately in a lump sum or incrementally in anywhere from two to five annual installments. This option is called CSB/REDUX. To be eligible to elect CSB/REDUX, you must qualify under your service's regulations for retention to 20 years. You must also agree to serve continuously until you complete a total of 20 years. In most cases, failure to complete 20 years of service will result in the soldier having to pay back the full, before-tax bonus amount.

Under CSB/REDUX, retired pay is calculated as follows:

Number of years of service creditable for percentage purposes
x 2.5 percent (that product cannot to exceed 75 percent)
– 1 percent for each year under 30,
x the average of your highest 36 months of basic pay
= Retired pay

In other words, you are credited with 2 percent per year through your 20th year and 3.5 percent for each year thereafter.

At age 62, retired pay will be recomputed under the High-3 formula discussed above; however, the recomputation will NOT be retroactive. Under CSB/REDUX, the longer an individual stays on active duty, the closer the retired pay percentage multiplier is to what it would have been under the High-3 retired pay plan, up to the 30-year point where the percentage multipliers are equal.

A soldier who accepts the $30,000 bonus and later retires for disability will use the High-3 formula for the length-of-service portion of retired pay.

Soldiers must be participating in the military Thrift Savings Plan, or TSP, on the effective date of their CSB/REDUX election to shelter/defer all or a portion of the CSB from taxes in the TSP.

Soldiers have six months to return their CSB/REDUX elections from the date of official notification of eligibility. Elections returned before a soldier's 15th year become effective and irrevocable at the 15th year. Elections returned after a soldier's 15th year because of late notification will become effective on the date received.

Retirement/separation process: How it

by Bob Gruver

As most AGR soldiers know, the Personnel Actions and Services Directorate assumed full responsibility for processing of all AGR separations in January 1998.

Since assuming that responsibility PASD has processed over 4,000 AGR soldiers' separations through retirement; expiration of term of service, or ETS, discharges; release from active duty, or REFRAD; temporary disability, permanent disability or other miscellaneous reasons, such as chapter cases; Qualitative Management Program, or QMP; and so forth).

There seems to be much confusion throughout the system on how the process really works.

■ **BASD:** Every soldier should have a basic idea of their BASD, (Basic Active Service Date). The Basic Active Service Date is a simple method of taking the date of entry on AGR and subtracting the total active federal service performed prior to entering on AGR. The BASD can change continually if there are breaks in active federal service.

Example: Soldier enters on AGR Nov. 6, 1985. Prior to entering on AGR the soldier had three years Regular Army time and then was a member of a troop program unit during which time the soldier performed five periods of 15 days either at annual training or active duty for training, or ADT: 15 times 5 equals 75 total days of AT/ADT, which converts to two months and 15 days of AT/ADT.

Adding the two months and 15 days to the 214 time of three years, 0 months, 0 days, equals three years, two months and 15 days active duty prior to entering on AGR. Subtract the three years, two months and 15 days from date of entry on AGR Nov. 6, 1985, and the correct adjusted BASD in this example would be Aug. 21, 1982.

What that means is the soldier would complete 20 years of active federal service Aug. 20, 2002, and could retire effective Sept. 1 provided all service obligations have been met.

The BASD is a critical date in determining retirement eligibility date as well as directly driving the date an enlisted soldier will reach his retention control point, or RCP. Inaccurate BASDs have a direct impact on the management process because if, that date is not accurate, key management decisions within the Full Time Support Management Directorate simply cannot be made.

■ **Retirement Point Accounting System printout:** Every AGR soldier receives a DARP Form 149 annually, which reflects what the system shows as the soldier's total active duty points as well as points credited for membership, drills performed (IDT) and correspondence courses points that have been credited.

It is the soldier's responsibility to review the DARP 149 and take appropriate action to have errors corrected. How to correct the DARP 149 is clearly explained in the instructions provided with the printout. It is quite apparent many soldiers are not taking the effort to have their DARP Forms 149 corrected in view of the number of corrections that must be made at the time AR-PERSCOM's Personnel Actions and Services Directorate, or PASD, receives the soldier's retirement action.

Correcting points at the time of computing a soldier's retirement is not the time for RPAS updates. The average AGR soldier spends approximately 15 years on active duty as an AGR soldier. That means for 15 years the soldier has been provided a DARP Form 149 and has taken no action to correct errors. Many of the errors PASD officials detect are obvious errors.

For example, a soldier had three years of active duty in the Regular Army and the RPAS does not reflect those three years. Soldier was in a TPU for six years prior to coming on AGR and attended all drills and performed an annual training period every year and the RPAS statement does not reflect any drills attended nor are the annual training periods reflected.

When soldiers fail to get their RPAS statements corrected, it causes extreme delays in processing of separations, especially retirements. Inaccurate RPAS statements are the primary cause for delays in providing separation orders in a timely manner. Workers in PASD's AGR Separations Branch are expending many hours researching documents trying to rebuild the RPAS statements to ensure the soldier is being credited for all duty performed that has a direct impact in the amount of retired pay a soldier will receive. Soldiers who fail to have their RPAS updated penalize those soldiers who have reviewed their RPAS statements and taken appropriate action to correct. In other words, PASD employees must spend a great deal of their time making last-minute corrections to RPAS statements when they could be processing those that are in order.

■ **Submission of retirement applications:** All soldiers may submit their respective retirement applications not earlier than 12 months prior to the desired date of retirement and not later than four months prior to the date the soldier desires to report to the respective transition point. Too many soldiers waiting until the last minute to submit their applications, and that profoundly disrupts the planned workload of processing retirements of soldiers who have submitted their applications in a timely manner.

There seems to be a serious trend of soldiers who have over 20 years' active duty who find a job and then the soldier submits his application to retire at the last minute and expects the system to drop everything to accommodate him. Certainly there will always be those situations for personal reasons that may necessitate a soldier retiring on short notice, but, those should be exceptions rather than the rule.

In the case of enlisted soldiers, unless the soldier is reaching RCP, the commander of AR-PERSCOM does not have to approve the requested retirement date.

For example, a soldier decides in May 2002 that he wants to retire Oct. 1. The soldier has 60 days' leave and if the soldier's command authorizes permissive temporary duty, or PTDY, for job-hunting

really works

the soldier could conceivably request to report to the transition point sometime in July 2002. It is unrealistic to expect the separations business process to react that quickly.

In this particular example, the commander of AR-PERSCOM does not have to approve the requested retirement date of Oct. 1 but rather may approve the retirement for a later date.

The separation process is not the only thing that is affected. Approval of retirement dates is critical because of the impact it has on the management decision process. The retirement date for soldiers who are reaching RCP cannot be changed by the commander of AR-PERSCOM; however, soldiers who are approaching RCP have no excuse for not submitting their voluntary retirement applications in a timely manner.

Bob Gruver works for the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command's Personnel Actions and Services Directorate.

NEWS NOTES

EXAM

Medical examination needed for retirement

by Sharon Nahlen
FTSMD Officer Special Actions

A retirement medical examination is not *optional*. It is a *mandatory* requirement as prescribed in Army Regulation 40-501, Standards of Medical Fitness, paragraph 8-23, dated March 28, 2002.

The retirement medical exam is to be completed not earlier than four months or later than one month prior to the retirement date or the beginning of the soldier's transition leave (when appropriate).

Be proactive and coordinate this requirement with your commander and the medical treatment facility early to preclude any last-minute problems.

Your retirement will take place on your eligibility date. You will not be retained on active duty to complete a physical examination.

AMERICAN FLAGS

Retire from active duty and receive one

Section 644 of Public Law 105-261 requires the uniformed services to issue American flags to soldiers who retire from active duty (including Reserve and National Guard soldiers) on or after Oct. 1, 1998, according to information from the Army Retirement Services Office, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, or ODCSPER at Headquarters, Department of the Army.

Soldiers should direct questions to the transition center that outprocessed them. For a listing of transition centers, go to **https://www.perscom.army.mil/tagd/tclist.htm**

To view the official message, go to **https://www.perscom.army.mil/tagd/msg/00-144.htm**

Keep in mind that computation of service is for all AGR soldiers, not just retiring soldiers

by Jeff McNeill
FTSMD Officer Special Actions

Few, if any, personnel actions occur without some sort of paperwork, and your computation of service is no different.

Your computation of service will be prepared using DA Form 1506 — Statement of Service-For Computation of Length of Service For Pay Purposes. The completion of this form establishes a variety of essential information for both you and the Full Time Support Management Directorate, or FTSMD.

Besides establishing your total years of active federal service and total creditable service, three dates are derived from the computation, which have a significant impact on your career, your basic active service date, or BASD; pay entry basic date, or PEBD; and date initially entered military service, or DIEMS. These dates are formulated from information recorded on your Chronological Statement of Retirement Points (ARPC Form 249-2-E) and in your official military personnel file, or OMPF, and/or military personnel records jacket, or MPRJ.

The BASD is an important management tool in that it enables us to project your retirement eligibility date. The PEBD is used in determining when you are entitled to increased basic pay. The DIEMS date determines which retired pay formula(s) will be used. There are three formulas for calculating the retired pay of soldiers retiring from active duty for length of service.

(See article on page 12 to determine the pay plan under which you fall.)

Initial computations of service will be mailed to you for your confirmation or correction. Upon receipt you should check all entries on the DA Form 1506. Even check the spelling of your name and Social Security number. Acknowledge receipt of the computation by promptly returning the DA Form 1506, with your signatures in Block 11a and Block 12.1 (when you concur with the computation) or Block 11a and Block 12.2 when you non-concur with the computation. If you are non-concurring with the computation, provide documentation, which supports your change(s).

Remember it is **your** responsibility to take an active part in ensuring your records are correct and complete.

‘Negatives’ of SBP: Are they really?

Warning: Retired pay stops when you die!

The Survivor Benefit Plan, or SBP, is the sole means for you to continue a portion of your military retired pay to your survivors. The decision must be made at retirement from military service and is a critical one, given its lifetime impact on your family’s financial well-being.

Too often, insufficient time and effort is devoted to gathering the facts needed to make an informed decision in the plan. Each of the following “most often discussed” features of SBP is offered to help prepare you (and your spouse) to make the best decision as it applies to your family’s personal goals and needs.

The cost of SBP increases. True, but relatively speaking, the cost remains constant. Retired pay, SBP costs and SBP annuities are all increased at the same rate by the annual retiree cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA. Also important is the built-in government subsidy, or cost share, which is targeted at 60 percent retiree/40 percent government.

I can buy more insurance the first year cheaper than SBP. The key phrase here is “in the first year.” What happens in the first year doesn’t really mean much, however. The SBP decision is for a lifetime. The indexing of retired pay gives SBP a lot of value “down the road,” which term insurance can’t offer. You can get a true picture of the long-term, extended costs and benefits by using the DOD Actuarial Disk, or asking your retirement services officer to provide a print-out which you can use as a basis of true comparison.

SBP doesn’t have cash value, and I can’t borrow against it. True. When a product offers you a cash value buildup, you pay plenty for it. SBP is an income-protection program that is often compared to term life insurance, which has no cash value. Term insurance is temporary protection purchased to protect a known risk for a known period of time. Its costs rise or the benefits decrease with age. SBP should, in fact, be likened to permanent, increasing term protection at a constant relative cost, which cannot be outlived by the spouse recipient.

SBP is taxed as an annuity. True. But, remember this important feature — SBP premiums are tax-free. You realize the tax-free benefit as you pay, since the premiums are deducted from your retired pay before taxable income is reported. This lowers your income tax obligation at the time when family income (and tax burden) is normally highest — as a couple. The annuitant’s tax bracket is typically significantly lower than when the retiree was alive. Which tax scenario is most advantageous?

No money is returned to me if my spouse dies first. True. You have gotten what you paid for — protection — in the form of a degree of financial security for your spouse had you died first. Premiums are not returned by your auto insurer if no accident occurs, or by your home insurer if no fire occurs. Why? Because you paid for protection as it was received. SBP is similar, but also is tax-advantaged, government-subsidized and inflation-adjusted.

If the possibility of getting no money back upon your spouse’s death bothers you, there is one simple way to minimize or eliminate that — insure your spouse’s life. In fact, you can use the tax savings offered by SBP to purchase such a policy.

Also not to be forgotten is the fact that since SBP elections are “by category,” the loss of your spouse suspends your costs until you remarry, at which time your previous coverage can be resumed at the same cost (6.5 percent). With a commercial product, the new spouse’s particulars (age, health, risk factors) would determine the cost of protection.

There is no residual estate for my children when my spouse dies. True again. SBP was never intended to be a legacy, but a continuation of a portion of retired pay to a beneficiary, primarily a spouse. However, eligible children can be designated as primary or alternate beneficiaries. If you wish, you can provide assets for a residual estate using products designed for that purpose: insurance, savings, and investments. RSOs agree: SBP offers the best gift you can give your children — a financially independent parent.

Spouse costs are excessive when compared to benefits received. Generally, all SBP costs are recovered through annuity receipt within three years of the retiree’s death. Some commercial plans have a “termination” date — maximum period for which benefits will be paid. Others have a “fixed starting date” — a date before which no benefits will be paid. SBP has neither of these.

One of the most important features of SBP is that is provides an annuity that cannot be outlived. Consider these statistics based on a male retired officer, aged 45, with a spouse aged 42. A total of 40 percent of the surviving spouses will survive 22 years following the retiree’s death; 50 percent will survive 19 years; and 70 percent will survive 15 years.

If no portion of retired pay continues (through SBP), it is likely there would be a period of time when the surviving spouse would have insufficient income to meet basic needs. SBP is guaranteed for a spouse’s lifetime, however long (although it is suspended if remarriage occurs prior to age 55.) Note: Female retirees should consult with an RSO to determine how their mortality prospects compare to their husband’s.

SBP is rigid and cannot be tailored to meet my individual needs. Continual attention under SBP is not necessary because SBP automatically increases annuities payable through receipt of COLAs. Tailoring to individual needs was already accomplished when the soldier’s retired pay was established, as that is the product being protected. Since SBP is an extension of retired pay, the tailoring is built-in, and is enhanced by the tie to COLAs. Flexible, tailored plans for individuals often cause confusion and make comparisons of two or more plans difficult. While commercial plans require continual adjustment and review as the economy changes, SBP requires no review because of COLA or retired pay. NOTE: More flexibility was added May 17, 1998. Since that date, a participant may terminate coverage between the 25th and 36th month following commencement of retired pay. Spouse concurrence is required; no costs are refundable; no future enrollment is permitted. Otherwise, the permanence of SBP guarantees protection for beneficiaries, which is the intent of the Plan.

I paid for a 55 percent benefit that is reduced to 35 percent at age 62. Not so. The 6.5 percent spouse cost is based on the post-62 benefit amount of 35 percent. The plan’s intent is to build upon the retiree’s Social Security entitlement, which is, in part, based on active military service. The second tier (post-62) reduction is more than made up by the retiree’s government-subsidized Social Security benefit (to which the surviving spouse is usually entitled).

Photo by Howard Sugai/9th RSC

Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Starks, an information management specialist at the 9th Regional Support Command in Hawaii, guides education service specialist Marsha Wellein, education counselors Judy Champaco and Leah Mariano, and test examiner Rachel Longoria through the VTC process.

Voluntary Education Program comes online with VTC technology

Sixteen regional support commands came together with AR-PERSCOM and USARC officials recently without spending a dime of TDY money.

No one donated their time or their airfare: Video technology in all of the locations made it all possible. Education service specialists from all over the country as well as in Hawaii and Puerto Rico sat down at conference tables in their own cities and discussed education legislation and other issues with their faraway counterparts.

These education professionals are all part of the Army Reserve Voluntary Education Program, or ARVEP. While the executive agent for ARVEP is AR-PERSCOM, people from all of the RSCs play a vital part in program management at the regional level. Because of this, it's important to "connect" periodically with all personnel involved in program operation and program management to ensure that all are in accord when it comes to changes and new initiatives. The video teleconference allows everyone involved to stay in touch while avoiding the expense of temporary duty, or TDY, trips and the expenditure of unnecessary man-hours.

VTCs allow the Army Reserve to save money so it can be spent on soldiers and to save time so that customer-service problems, involving programs such as tuition assistance, are solved faster, said Wanda Estes, a Resource Consultants Inc., or RCI, contractor who coordinated the project.

This VTC was the brainchild of Jonell Calloway, the director of USAR Education, and her supervisor, Dennis Mikale, of the AR-PERSCOM's Personnel Actions and Services Directorate. Estes, Calloway's assistant, did the legwork, and Juli Thompson of the AR-PERSCOM Video Information Center provided the technical exper-

Photo by Wanda Estes/ RCI contractor at AR-PERSCOM

Video technician Juli Thompson gets education director Jonell Calloway and her supervisor, Dennis Mikale, ready to begin the video teleconference from AR-PERSCOM in St. Louis.

tise for the hookup.

"I am extremely excited about coordinating this program and overwhelmed by the outcome," Estes said. "The pictures are worth a thousand words."

The June 18, 19 and 20 series of video teleconferences is the largest that the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM, has ever hosted: Sixteen sites (within USARC) were involved over the series, said Bill Herod, supervisor of the Video Information Center.

It was a triumph that 15 of the 16 connected. One was unable due to equipment incompatibility, Thompson said. The 94th RSC came in on audio only.

"The Voluntary Education Program truly leads the way in utilizing our VTC equipment," she said.

Mikale and Calloway anticipate that a VTC will be conducted at least quarterly to address issues of concern that can be solved without traveling.

"Our objective is to successfully promote lifelong learning for our soldiers in ways that we can save the government money," Calloway said.

Photo by Wanda Estes
Juli Thompson in the control room.

Photos by Susanne Aspley/88th RSC Public Affairs
VTC at the 88th Regional Support Command in Fort Snelling, Minn.: David Moulder, the human-resources chief; RCI lead contractor Brenda McCrory; and education service specialist Barbara L. Stetler participate in the largest video teleconference that AR-PERSCOM has ever orchestrated. At right, Barny Miller, a distance learning classroom, or DLC, contractor from ACS Systems and Engineering Inc., monitors the video teleconference at the 88th RSC.

TSP changes coming soon

by Sgt. 1st Class Kathleen T. Rhem

WASHINGTON, July 3, 2002 — Upcoming improvements to the Thrift Savings Plan for both military and federal civilian employees will make the program easier to use.

Lt. Col. Tom Emswiler, an Army lawyer who directs the Armed Forces Tax Council in the Pentagon, said the most significant change will be that accounts will become daily valued, instead of the current monthly valued. All transactions will be updated daily, he said.

Other changes include better online access to accounts and participant statements expressed in shares and dollars, instead of just dollars as the current statements are.

All changes are due to be implemented Sept. 16. Emswiler said no action is required from participants. However, he cautioned, there will be a two-week period from the end of August until Sept. 16 during which participants will be unable to make certain changes to their accounts or make withdrawals.

"For that two-week period when they're actually transferring accounts into the new record-keeping system, there's going to be a pause in your ability to do certain things," he said. "But otherwise, this is basically going to be seamless."

TSP participants will gain the ability to make changes daily, "but this isn't meant to make you a day trader," Emswiler said. "Think about your long-term investment needs and don't move your accounts simply based on short-term market fluctuations."

He noted the Thrift Savings Plan is intended to be a retirement investment plan. "That means it's a long-term investment, you don't want to just jump around based on short-term needs," he said. "You want to develop your investment strategy based on what level of risk you're willing to accept, whether your needs are long-term or short-term, and then stick with that plan."

To learn more, visit **www.tsp.gov** A chart outlining the upcoming changes is available online at **www.tsp.gov/forms/tsplf11.pdf** *(or see story on page 22 of the Hub.)*

Sgt. 1st Class Kathleen T. Rhem writes for the American Forces Press Service.

A Soldier's Family

A special section to address issues that are important to all of you

FPAC delegates advise USAR chief

by Andrea Wales

To the uninitiated, the Army spouse is just along for the ride, but Army spouses and their soldiers know better.

It's in their best interest to be let their voices be heard: They have the power to influence the military lifestyle.

Army Reserve spouses and other volunteer representatives from the regional support commands and AR-PERSCOM brought soldier-and-family issues before the chief of the Army Reserve this spring in Kansas City, Mo.

While retired Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Plewes was the chief of the Army Reserve, the members of the CAR Family Program Advisory Council, or FPAC, provided advice and assistance regarding improving policy that affects Family Program issues for the entire Army Reserve community, according to Maj. Twanda "Tia" Young, the U.S. Army Reserve Command family readiness coordinator and the coordinator of the council meeting.

The USAR Family Readiness Office is the CAR's executive agent in all matters pertaining to FPAC.

The program began in November 1991, and, just as his predecessors did, the new chief of the Army Reserve, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, places high priority on this program.

"The FPAC process is a valuable tool for our families because it brings issues that … are important to families to the attention of senior leaders," said his wife, Maria Helmly, who is now an adviser to the group.

"Senior leaders are extremely interested in these issues and are ready to address them. It is a great way for senior leaders to find out what is important at the grass-

"I am humbled to accept the responsibility for the leadership of all the soldiers and civilian employees of the Army Reserve. This responsibility includes caring for their family members and supporting the employers of our soldiers, tasks no less important than ensuring Army Reserve soldiers are well-trained and ready to take on the many challenges we have today."

Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly
Chief, Army Reserve
May 29, 2002, first day at his post

Here's your family's rep on the CAR's council

Members of the Family Program Advisory Council met at the Kansas City, Mo., Westin Crown Center hotel in April to discuss "Army well-being issues," what was once known as quality of life. Feel free to contact your FPAC delegate with any soldier-and-family issues you may have. Address your issues to:

7th ARCOM's Tracy Schmidt;
9th RSC's Gail Collins;
63rd RSC's FPAC chairwoman Tamara O'Neal;
65th RSC's Minerva Mendez;
77th RSC's Bernard DuPaul;
81st RSC's Paula Nicoletti;
88th RSC's Mary Ann Kamps, also FPAC's recording secretary;
89th RSC's JoAnn Steiner;
90th RSC's Gloria Matthias;
96th RSC's Dwendy Talbott;
99th RSC's Heather Cupec;
AR-PERSCOM's Sgt. 1st Class William Singleton; or
USASOC's Jennifer Mennenga.

Other people affiliated with FPAC:

Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, the chief of the Army Reserve;
his wife, Maria Helmly, an adviser;
Trisha Lackey, wife of Army Reserve Command Sgt. Maj. Alex Ray Lackey and an FPAC adviser ;
C.R. "Lee" Ratliff, the chief of Family Readiness for the U.S. Army Reserve; and
Maj. Twanda "Tia" Young, the USAR's FPAC manager.

roots level," the Army Reserve's first lady said.

True to Army fashion, problems are to be solved at the lowest level possible, such as at the unit, so that problems are solved as quickly as they can. However, some problems can only be solved by policy changes at the U.S. Army Reserve level, at the Department of the Army level or at Department of Defense level. If, after the FPAC meeting, issues are deemed unsolvable at local units, they are forwarded to the annual Army Reserve Army Family Action Plan Conference. The AFAP conference was held in St. Louis June 7 and 8. *(See story this page.)*

Some of the concerns at the Family Program Advisory Council meeting in Kansas City were:

■ need for soldiers to document their military service (far in advance of when they must ask, "How many retirement points do I have?") including

◆ drill points;

◆ annual training;

◆ military education;

◆ Initial Active Duty for Training, or IADT;

■ desire for servicemembers to receive agency matching funds under the Thrift Savings Plan as civilian employees do (See story this section.);

■ interest in medical benefits for gray-area retirees (at 55 instead of 60);

■ lack of recognition for volunteers at funeral services; and

■ need for video teleconferencing equipment, which will allow family members to speak to the servicemembers in remote (and not so remote) areas.

"FPAC delegates have a huge responsibility and opportunity to impact the quality of life for soldiers and their families," said Tammy O'Neal, the FPAC chairwoman and the delegate for the 63rd RSC. "Now, more than ever, we owe it to our soldiers to provide the best help we can."

Some FPAC success stories include:

■ 24 commissary visits a year are now authorized for Army Reservists and their families;

■ family readiness is now rated on a commander's officer evaluation report.

"In terms of ordinary mobilizations and the formalized family readiness programs, we've been doing much better. Organizations like FPAC have made a real contribution to a different way of doing … business," Plewes said. "On the other hand, since Sept. 11, we've seen a whole new group of challenges: hasty mobilizations, large mobilizations of individual mobilization augmentees and several hundred Individual Ready Reservists."

To adapt to the changing mobilization scene, family readiness programs are going to have to be more responsive and be capable of being employed more quickly, he said.

"And sustained for longer periods of time," added his wife, Liz Plewes, an adviser for the latest FPAC.

Family readiness programs have been shown to be so important that the Army Reserve has earmarked $25 million to bring 25 people on board to help set up family readiness groups and do mobilization briefings. Two will be at the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM, for the Individual Mobilization Augmentee and Individual Ready Reserve Programs, said C.R. "Lee" Ratliff, the chief of the USAR Family Readiness Office. These positions will increase from 24 to 49.

"Every commander needs to have a direct and independent channel of communication with the field and this has worked very well in terms of family readiness programs," Plewes said. "I don't think there are any senior leaders who don't see the value (of the Family Readiness Program), but new commanders don't always embrace it because they have their plate full. It's an education process."

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 may have sped up the education process in the units and in America as a whole.

"We have shown the value of having good family support programs since September," Plewes said. "We have gone into a whole new way of doing business. It's a forecast of the future, not just a onetime thing."

Since the events of Sept. 11, America has been more appreciative of the Reserve soldier.

"We have never been so appreciated," said the Army Reserve's former first lady. "They go out of their way to say, 'Thank goodness for the National Guard and the Army Reserve.' We (as part of the Reserve family) used to say (to the Active Component), 'You can't go to war without us,' and now they're saying, 'We can't go to war without you.' "

After FPAC

Soldier-and-

by Master Sgt. Brian Kappmeyer

Members of the Army Reserve family gathered at the Adam's Mark hotel in St. Louis for the annual Army Reserve Army Family Action Plan Conference June 7 and 8.

Delegates representing married and single soldiers (TPU and AGR), retirees, family members and civilians from around the world were asked to evaluate and prioritize 45 "quality of life" issues forwarded by regional support commands during the year.

"We need to understand the human side of being a soldier, and it is important to them to know that their families are well taken care of while they are away," Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, the chief of the Army Reserve, said in his opening remarks. "This is a people-centric organization, and we need to do a better job at taking care of the soldiers."

Helmly linked the importance of properly training soldiers for worldwide missions that reservists receive today to taking care of the families.

"We can do everything in the world for families, but at the end of the day the best way to help families is to bring back soldiers alive," Helmly said referring to the worldwide missions. He emphasizes to unit leaders the importance of properly training their soldiers and wouldn't hesitate in pulling a leader from a position if that soldier wasn't training soldiers to standard.

Ten or 11 delegates were assigned to each of the six work groups to discuss the 45 issues passed to them by AFAP. The groups were organized into discussion groups including: deployment, reserve retirement, volunteer/family programs, community/education, soldier entitlements and entitlements.

Following several hours of discussing and evaluating the issues within their groups, all of the delegates then selected the top few issues they want presented to Army leadership for resolution. These issues reflect the needs of the Army Reserve family and are sent forward with recommendations to meet those needs.

The following top six issues will be sent to Army Reserve leadership for review and then sent to the worldwide Department of

family issues move to the next level

Photo by Master Sgt. Brian Kappmeyer

From the recent Army Family Action Plan conference came several new initiatives to improve the "quality of life" for members of the Army Reserve family. Discussing current issues are (from left) C.R. Lee Ratliff, chief of the USAR Family Readiness Program; Maria Helmly, wife of Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, the chief of the Army Reserve; Trisha Lackey, wife of Command Sgt. Maj. Alex R. Lackey; Lt. Col. Joe Hardman, chief of the Personnel Services Division at ARPERSCOM; and Dorothy Benford, AFAP program manager.

the Army AFAP Conference in November for further consideration:

- Reserve out-of-pocket expenses related to drill.
- Retirement points accounting.
- tuition assistance.
- Family leased housing (tied with tuition assistance).
- Continental United States, or CONUS, commissary privileges.
- Subsidized civilian health insurance

In response to the Army Reserve playing a much larger role in the defense of the United States during recent years, the number of "Quality of Life" concerns has increased.

"People are understanding how difficult life can be for some reserve families," said Dorothy Benford, AFAP program manager for the Army Reserve. "AFAP is by far the most meaningful program for the well-being of soldiers, their families and the Army. I encourage commanders to support the program, because the people in the local areas know better what the concerns are of people in that area."

One of those local representatives was delegate Brenda J. Wilson with the 3rd Battalion, 319th Regiment (Logistics Support), in Lancaster, Pa. Wilson is a unit administrator and a reserve master sergeant, who spoke passionately about supporting the members of the Army Reserve family.

"You have to care — you have to have a passion or you'll burn out," Wilson said. "When we go off and leave our families, we need to know that our families are taken care of," she said.

"What stood out the most, for me, was Lt. Gen. Helmly's briefing and slides," Wilson said. "It set the stage for the purpose of the AFAP Conference — that the Quality of Life for our soldiers and their families are equally as important as the crises we encounter."

Two young men from Longmont, Colo., also provided their insight into helping shape future Army Reserve family policy. Matt and Will Talbott, 17-year-old twin sons of retired Command Sgt. Maj. George Talbott and his wife, retired 1st Sgt. Dwendy Talbott, have been involved in family support activities for years.

"I have been involved with family readiness because I have been an 'Army brat' my whole life," Matt said. "It is a way of life for us. What I get personally from helping out is that I get to find out what the USAR is all about from both the soldier and the family point of view."

Will added, "I enjoy participating in family readiness because it allows me to interact with the military and I get to help out other people. I know that I am making a difference in someone's life."

"I thought it was interesting to learn about the different issues on what family readiness has to deal with and what I can do to help change," Matt said. "The medical and dental benefits were most important to me because if my dad were mobilized it would be a good thing to have because he may not be able to keep our insurance through his work if he were to be gone for a while."

Will thought that Equal Employment Opportunity and tuition assistance were important issues.

"I thought the EEO issue is important because the military is very diverse and family members should have the opportunity to interact and know more about different races and cultures," Will said. "Tuition assistance is important because it would allow the mobilizing soldiers to go to school and better themselves for better job opportunities and to be better soldiers.

"I learned so much (at the conference) and now I have a better understanding of what the military is like and how the system works," Will said. "I also found out that it is just as hard for the soldier to have to leave the family as it is for us to lose our mom or dad for a while."

The issues that are not selected during the Army Reserve AFAP conference to move forward for further consideration are returned to the U.S. Army Reserve Command with the work group's recommendation for resolution at a lower level, rewriting the issue or for resubmission at the next conference.

In case you wanted to know more about your

Retirement and entitlement benefits

by Bernie DuPaul
Retirement benefits and
entitlements specialist
Registered investment adviser

The Thrift Savings Plan is one of the most underused programs because people don't understand it. Here is what you need to know about TSP using the KISS (or "Keep it simple, 'soldier' ") principle.

What is TSP?

The Thrift Savings Plan is a retirement savings and investment program that is available to civilian and uniformed services of the federal government. It is similar to a 401(k) plan.

Who is eligible to participate?

Members of the uniformed services and federal civil servicemembers are eligible.

When can you sign up?

You can sign up during the following open-season periods:
May 15 to July 31 and
Nov. 15, 2002, to Jan. 31, 2003.

Why should you? Which pension formula are you under, the 50 percent or 40 percent formula?

The retirement systems for active-duty retirement *(See story on page 14 or OSD Military Compensation web site at* **http://militarypay.dtic.mil/actives/retirement***)* for 20 years of service are:

1.**Final Pay** - This system applies to members who entered the service for the first time before Sept. 8, 1980. (50 percent).

2.**High 3 pay** - This system applies to members who first entered service after Sept. 8, 1980, but before Aug. 1, 1986. It also applies to individuals who entered on or after Aug. 1, 1986, who do not elect the REDUX retirement system with the Career Status Bonus at their 15th year of service. (50 percent).

Photo by Andrea Wales
Bernie DuPaul speaks at the FPAC meeting in Kansas City, Mo., last spring.

3. **REDUX** - This system applies to those who entered service on or after Aug. 8, 1986. (40 percent)

If you are under the 40 percent formula, the Thrift Savings Plan is a great way to make up the difference. If you're under the 50 percent formula, you can live even more comfortably in your retirement years if you elect TSP.

The Investment funds are:
G fund- Short-term non-marketable U.S. Treasury securities. Guaranteed rate.
F fund- Bond index fund, fixed-income securities.
C fund- Common stock index fund.
S fund- Small capitalization indexed fund.
I fund- International stock indexed fund.

Remember diversification in the above funds is a key characteristic in putting together a TSP plan that fits your own risk profile not someone else's.

Put your plan in place and monitor it at least once a year. Do not try to time the market. Very few individuals are successful at this.

Get professional financial advice, not peer advice, when putting together your plan for retirement. Take into account when you qualify to take a distribution and when you plan to retire and how much you will need.

How much could you contribute?

You can contribute 7 percent of your monthly base pay in 2002, increasing 1 percentage point each year through 2005 up to a maximum of 10 percent. The annual cap amount is $11,000 for 2002 and rising by $1,000 each year until hitting $15,000 in 2006.

How do you sign up?

Complete the TSP election form TSP-U-1.
Complete the beneficiary form TSP-U-3.
See your unit personnel officer or contact:
TSP web site: **www.tsp.gov**
TSP Thrift Line: (504) 255-8777
TSP Service Office:
TSP Service Office
National Finance Ctr
P.O. Box 61500
New Orleans, La. 70161

How do I find out more?

If you would like to know more about the TSP program and how to use it effectively as a part of your military and/or federal civilian retirement plan, you can contact DuPaul by sending an electronic message, or e-mail, to **Bdupaul77@aol.com** or by dialing (516) 538-1675. He has put together a simple 15-minute computer presentation on TSP you can request. *(See page 18 for details on upcoming changes to the Thrift Savings Plan.)*

You can also learn more by reading *2002 Military Thrift Savings Plan Handbook by FEDweek*, November 2001, from which DuPaul gleaned some information.

Bernie DuPaul, a retired colonel from the Army Reserve, is a financial adviser, specializing in military and federal employee retirement as well as benefits/entitlements and health plans.

He is also a military family member and a representative of the chief of the Army Reserve's Family Program Advisory Council, or FPAC, for the 77th Regional Support Command. (See story on page 19.)

VIEWPOINT

COMMANDER'S CALL
CUSTOMER CONTACT OFFICE
continued from page 3

IMT folks gather knowledge from the internal directorate action offices to better serve the command with routing or diverting correspondence by subject matter. On average, they are able to complete 3 percent of incoming actions while referring 27 percent to other internal and external agencies, such as the National Archives and Records Administration, or NARA; the Enlisted Records Evaluations Center, or EREC; Personnel Command, or PERSCOM; Army Review Boards Agency, or ARBA; and the National Guard Liaison Office on-site, or ZNG.

This fiscal year, the IMT has input and routed over 114,000 cases. With scanners, the IMT has joined with internal offices to develop a program that is able to scan the ARPC Form 3725/IRR Screening special project and have processed over 11,000 cases. Currently, they process all incoming correspondence for the Personnel Actions and Services Directorate, the Full Time Support Management Directorate, the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate and the recently added the Health Services Management Directorate to the fold. The Officer Personnel Management Directorate will soon follow.

The Customer Service Team consists of a call center receiving approximately 15,000 calls per month, a parlor (front desk) that handles approximately 300 walk-in customers per month and two military identification, or ID, card stations issuing approximately 250 ID cards per month.

The goal of Team C is to support AR-PERSCOM by fully answering as many calls as possible without transferring to the functional area.

Its contact representatives are generalist trained in every function of this agency. Every call they answer prevents an employee in a functional area from being taken away from completing his job — which might be correcting your retirement points. When inquiries are entered into SMS and tracked from entry to work completion, that information is readily available to provide to the customer.

CCO's parlor area (front desk) is open to the public; however, I suggest you make an appointment prior to coming to AR-PERSCOM for any purpose other than to obtain ID cards. CCO's contact representatives will do everything possible to assist their customers, but most functional offices require appointments and request unit members use their unit administrators and chain of command.

CCO has five fully automated counseling rooms for their customers' use. Soldiers can log onto their AKO accounts and obtain copies of a few necessary documents while visiting. Their ID stations are open from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. — no appointment necessary. They issue military ID cards to all branches of the armed services, including active duty, reserve, retired and family members. They also prepare cards for visiting members of foreign governments and work with Department of Defense contractors in the St. Louis area, such as Boeing.

The customer service area includes a comfortable waiting area with laptop connections so that customers can gain access the "Twice the citizen" web site and its personalized web portal, My2xCitizen, as well as to their Army Knowledge Online, or AKO, accounts.

With all the great things that CCO can do for you, it's no wonder that its people held a contest in June to adopt a motto that best describes their mission.

Considering their close correlation to Customer Relationship Management and the volume of inquiries they receive, they took their motto from the most important thing that they do:

Connecting Questions 2 Answers
1 (800) 318-5298.

FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR
USE YOUR CHAIN
continued from page 4

The chain of command and the NCO support channel are tools that are in place within the Army's system to maintain structure and control. As leaders and future leaders, we have the ongoing mission of instilling in our soldiers that the system works and supports the needs of all soldiers. It is our goal to make sure that soldiers maintain a sense of trust in this system. As we have all seen or heard, there has been an abundance of cases of abuse to this system. What consequences do we apply to the abuse of the chain of command and the NCO support channel?

First we must *educate, educate, educate*. Learn your chain of command and your NCO support channel. Second, we must as leaders support the chain and channel along with supporting the needs of our soldiers. Third, if the chain of command and NCO support channel is "broke," *we must fix it!* We must also let soldiers know that there are consequences for their actions and Fourth, we must discipline appropriately. Bottom line: It's time to get back to the basics. HOOAH!

My chain of command is: Col. Elton C. Bruce, commander, AR-PERSCOM; Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, chief, Army Reserve; Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, chief of staff of the Army; Thomas E. White, secretary of the Army; Donald H. Rumsfeld, secretary of defense; and President George W. Bush Jr., commander in chief. My NCO support channel is: Command Sgt. Maj. Alex R. Lackey, command sergeant major of the Army Reserve, and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack L. Tilley.

Do you know what your chain of command and NCO support channel are?

CGSC students meet Bush

AR-PERSCOM soldier among them

by Lia Russell

Students and instructors from CGSC had the rare opportunity to salute their commander in chief when they heard him speak at Oak Park High School in Kansas City, Mo., recently.

This opportunity to hear President George W. Bush came compliments of Maj. Victor Sredl, a reservist from Paducah, Ky., who has a friend currently serving as a presidential communications officer at the White House Communications Agency in Washington, D.C. Sredl was a member of the Command and General Staff College's Reserve Component Command and General Staff Officer Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

During a casual conversation June 8 with his old college buddy, Maj. Brian Hatheway, Sredl mentioned that he was at Fort Leavenworth attending the two-week CGSOC's Phase II.

Hatheway said his agency had a team in Kansas City preparing for the president's visit June 11.

"You wanna go see the boss?" he asked Sredl.

Sredl asked if he could extend the invitation to his classmates.

Hatheway helped arrange for up to 20 students of the 11th Battalion, 95th Division (Institutional Training) to attend the event, and Sredl consulted with his instructors to arrange the visit on his end.

Lt. Col. Jeffrey Moss was one of the lucky 20.

"We only had about 12 hours to work out all the necessary arrangements and receive proper approval," Moss said. "Besides making arrangements to complete our coursework on an altered schedule, we had to work out logistics, a course of action, timetables, route reconnaissance and individual responsibilities. We even had convoy communications for all the vehicles that carpooled to the event."

White House photo by Paul Morse
President George W. Bush discusses his plan to transform the office of Homeland Security into a Cabinet agency at Oak Park High School in Kansas City, Mo., Tuesday, June 11.

About 1,000 people attended the event, including many children.

"We had prime seating," Sredl said. "We were very near the podium. It was very exciting for us to be there."

The soldiers, dressed in battle dress uniforms, or BDUs, were a prominent feature of the crowd.

"We were honored and privileged to hear our commander in chief speak. It was very inspirational," Moss said. "And we were absolutely thrilled when he saluted us."

Maj. Linda Moore of the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, or AR-PERSCOM, was one of the CGSC contingent that heard the president.

"The president talked about the 'Axis of Evil' and that it would not prevail," she said. "He said we could not allow terrorism to continue and that we would hunt (the source of) terrorism down."

She said the president also stressed the importance of homeland security and gathering the duties of the 100 agencies responsible for it under one Cabinet agency.

"If somebody tries to take our freedoms away, or if somebody tries to frighten us because of our freedoms, we'll respond," the president said. "And I'm proud to report this mighty nation has responded. We are fierce, and we're tough when it comes to defending our values.

"This great country will show the world that we fight for what we believe, as we seek justice. And this great country will show the world the true compassion and decency of a great nation," Bush said.

Others from CGSC who were there included:

Lt. Col. Dan Bouchette
Maj. Henry Carson
Maj. Luis Deorbegozo
Maj. Eric Evans
Maj. Stephen Freeman
Maj. Joanne Gale
Maj. David F. Jones
Maj. Ronald C. Luppens
Maj. Deanne Mahon
Lt. Col. Roland Prillman
Maj. Thomas Scott
Maj. Elizabeth A. Smith
Maj. Charles Stachowski
Maj. John Wells

Lia Russell writes for the Fort Leavenworth (Kan.) Lamp. *Andrea Wales contributed to this report.*

AR-PERSCOM
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St. Louis, Mo. 63132-5200

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