

WARRANT OFFICER RECRUITING AND RETENTION ACTION PLAN

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The pace is fast and furious. As the Army is carrying the heaviest load in the Global War on Terror and transforming to the Army Modular Force, warrant officer (WO) authorizations are increasing to support requirements in the new modular brigades. We currently see an increase of 13% (primarily in technical service MOSs) on the active component side, and this number will increase as more modular brigades are brought on line. Corresponding increases in the Army Reserve and Army National Guard will occur as brigades in those components convert to modular units and Active Component/Reserve Component (AC/RC) Rebalance is implemented. Because of some historical shortages on the technical service side and the increase in authorizations due to modular conversions, we are facing some significant challenges in filling WO positions in our modular units.

Several months ago the VCSA, GEN Richard Cody, asked that we bring together a group of CW5s to sit down with him and discuss issues related to recruiting and retaining WOs in the force. GEN Cody asked that we look hard and find "out of the box" solutions to improve both recruiting and retention. We gathered together a group of CW5s which included representatives from the Army Staff, ARNG, USAR, Human Resources Command, and other senior WOs depending on the issues at hand. We have been meeting with the VCSA about every six weeks to identify issues and develop action plans to work these issues. Our WO Policy Integrator in the Army G1 (previously CW5 Al Eggerton, recently retired, and now CW5 Carl Jenkins) took the lead and did the heavy lifting on coordinating the efforts and collecting and briefing the information. On 27 Jun 05, the CSA, VCSA and a group of ten other general officers were briefed on the initiatives. The briefing was well received and the initiatives approved by the CSA. We will continue to work these issues, and others as they are identified, and meet with the VCSA on a regular basis for azimuth checks. The following is a discussion of those initiatives (some recommended by the group, and some which have been working for awhile) which we believe will improve recruiting and retention.

Combat Contingency Direct Appointments: This initiative was personally directed by the CSA, in response to a request from a field commander, to quickly identify and appoint Soldiers to serve as Interrogators, MOS 351E. Shortages in 351E were severely affecting mission accomplishment in Iraq. The Army G1 developed a plan, and HRC screened files to identify a number of Soldiers who met the qualifications established by the MI proponent. A board was appointed and met to consider the files and select a pre-determined number of "best qualified" Soldiers to be offered a direct appointment. The offers were sent to the Soldiers, and those who accepted have been, or are in the process of being, appointed as WO1s. These new WO1s will attend a two week officer transition course in conjunction with their WOBC at Fort Huachuca.

There has been a great deal of discussion about direct appointments in the past few years, and because of this discussion there is some expectation in the NCO community, particularly in the reserve components, that "direct appointments are coming back." I am

advised that some NCOs are waiting for this to become policy before they apply for WO. The rumor that direct appointments will become the norm is incorrect, and those who seem to be awaiting that change need to be advised that if they continue to wait for direct appointments they will retire as NCOs. If this program is used again, which it may be, it will be very limited.

RC Accession Bonus: This initiative provides a \$6,000 accession bonus for WOs who agree to serve six years in the Selective Reserves. Implementation guidance was approved in Feb 05, and the program is being executed now. To date, over 200 officers have chosen to take this option.

WO Pay Table Reform Initiative: This initiative, which was recommended by the WO ATLDP study, would increase the pay difference between NCO and WO grades to provide more incentive for NCOs (specifically senior NCOs) to apply for WO. LTC Rick Tillotson, Army G1, conducted an exhaustive study of WO/NCO pay and established that targeted pay raises for NCOs in the past had “compressed” the pay scale between the NCO and WO ranks. He developed an excellent argument for pay scale reform and presented his findings to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The OSD Pay and Incentives action officers agreed that the pay scale was compressed and that adjustments should be made, and they agreed to do so as targeted pay raises were allowed. OSD made some adjustments by targeting the WO pay scales in 2004. Targeting was not authorized in 2005, and will not be authorized in 2006. In order to obtain OSD support for future targeted pay raises, a memorandum from the Army leadership supporting WO pay scale reform was sent to OSD in Apr 05, and efforts will continue to adjust the pay scales as the budget and Congress allow.

Establish Official FY05 Army Reserve WO Recruiting Mission of 350: This initiative added a WO recruiting mission as an additional focus for Army Reserve retention NCOs, and 43 additional NCO recruiters were assigned in Apr/May 04 to focus specifically on recruiting WOs. This initiative has been very successful as indicated by performance numbers. In Jun 04, with a mission of 300, the Army Reserve had only recruited 157 candidates. The dedicated NCO recruiters began working the WO mission in May 04 and their work enabled the Army Reserve to exceed the mission of 300 in FY04 by recruiting a total of 337. As of Jun of 05, with a mission of 350, a total of 329 candidates have been recruited for FY05. A definite success story.

Blue to Green Program: As the Navy and Air Force are downsizing their enlisted force, the Army developed the Blue to Green program to recruit enlisted personnel from those services into the Army. This initiative will change the initial Blue to Green program, which was targeted at enlisted to enlisted transition, to include a focus on recruiting enlisted personnel from these services to transition as Army WOs.

Increased Maximum Age for Initial Aviation Training: This initiative, requested by the Aviation proponent and approved for execution, increases the age limit for initial aviation training from 29 to 32, thus increasing the pool of NCOs eligible for aviation training.

Active Component WO Accession Bonus: This initiative authorizes an accession bonus for hard to fill MOSs. Currently MOS 180A, Special Forces (SF), is authorized a \$20,000 accession bonus for Soldiers who access and complete their WOBC. Several other MOSs are under review for a possible bonus.

Two-phase Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS): The Warrant Officer Career Center is currently conducting pilot courses for a two-phase WOCS. Full implementation is expected by Dec 05. The two-phase course was developed to recognize prior experience of NCOs and reduce the negative “basic training” perception of WOCS. Soldiers who have not completed the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) will continue to attend the full six week WOCS; however, Soldiers who have completed PLDC will skip the first two week phase, complete a distance learning prerequisite, and only attend the second phase of the course in resident status (4 weeks and 3 days).

Expand NCO MOS pool for accession into Technical Service WO Specialties: One way to reduce the pay scale disincentive for transition from enlisted to WO status is to access Soldiers earlier in their careers. The current goal for accessions is 5-8 years of service; however, we are averaging over 10 years for our new accessions. CW5 Bobby Cox, HRC Warrant Officer Division, proposed an alternate model to attract and access Soldiers into technical MOS. His model would allow Soldiers meeting the basic appointment criteria (non-MOS specific) from non-feeder MOS, or more junior Soldiers in feeder MOS, to apply for WO. More training would replace experience for these Soldiers. Soldiers could apply with as little as 3 years time-in-service. If selected, they would be appointed as a WO Candidate (WOC) and attend the first phase of the WOCS, followed by AIT/BNCOC/ANCOC (whatever was appropriate) for the appropriate feeder MOS. If they successfully complete these courses, they would return to WOCS to attend phase II, followed by WOBC.

The courses the Soldier would attend in this program may be different depending on the experience level of each Soldier. This proposal would allow the use of existing courses to provide basic and more advanced levels of training.

There are several advantages to this model. It would access younger WO's, thus eliminating the pay scale disincentive and allowing more service as a WO prior to retirement eligibility. It would expand the accession pool to every Soldier in the Army who could meet the basic accession criteria, and could also be used to access individuals directly from technical school. The model would use existing courses. The disadvantages would be increased train-up time, the need to intensively manage the training requirements and progress of each individual, and the fact that the resultant WO1 would not be the same WO1 as “legacy” WOs.

Decentralize and Integrate WOCS with ARNG State-run OCS at Regional Training Institutes (RTI): This is an alternative program for those ARNG and USAR candidates qualified to begin the new two-phase WOCS in the second phase. Integrating WOCS into the state-run RTIs allows the utilization of the existing OCS facilities, cadre, and resources. This State WOCS program may make training more accessible to

qualified RC candidates who cannot afford to spend five consecutive weeks away from their home station to attend resident WOCS. Training at the RTIs will encompass one Inactive Duty Training (IDT) "weekend drill" a month for six months and a two-week ADT "annual training" period to complete. RC candidates will continue to have the option to attend the WOCS resident course at Fort Rucker. Pilot courses are scheduled to begin in FY06 with full implementation planned for FY07. States scheduled to conduct the (IDT) pilot classes in FY06 are AL, AZ, CA, CT, IN, KS, MD, MN, PA and SC. The two week ADT portion will be conducted in September at Camp Atterbury, IN.

APFT Waiver Policy for WO Accessions: Current policy prohibits Soldiers who cannot take and pass the standard 3-event APFT from applying for WO. Although enlisted Soldiers were being asked to deploy and fight the Global War on Terror with their physical limitations, they were being denied the opportunity to seek additional responsibility as officers. The VCSA has approved a policy change to allow Soldiers who take the alternate APFT to apply for both OCS and WOCS. Soldiers who are otherwise qualified for WOCS, who cannot complete all three events of the standard APFT, but can complete and pass an alternate APFT, may apply for WOCS as long as they can meet the physical requirements for deployment in the requested WO MOS. Although they may make a recommendation on the application, branch proponents will not have approval/disapproval authority on these requests. Approval/disapproval authority will rest with the Army G3. The Army G3 will evaluate these requests with a view toward providing the opportunity for officer training to those Soldiers who would be able to physically perform the duties required in their requested specialties in a deployed environment.

College Loan Repayment Program for Officers: This initiative will enable Soldiers accessing into officer ranks to retain educational loan repayment benefits. A legislative change package has been submitted to change the law. If passed, it will take effect in FY06.

AC WO Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB): This bonus will be targeted at senior WOs with 20 years of service in critically short MOS. The purpose of the bonus is to hold senior WOs in the force until we can recruit and access sufficient numbers of junior WOs. Bonuses are currently authorized for SF and certain MI WOs with between 20 and 25 years of service.

RC WO Critical Skills Retention Bonus: RC WOs were not included in the CSRB which was authorized by Congress for FY05. A legislative change package has been submitted to authorize CSRB for RC WOs in FY06. The MOSs which would receive the bonus will be determined after the legislation is passed.

RC Affiliation Bonus: This initiative, which is approved and being executed, provides a \$6,000 affiliation bonus for WOs who agree to serve 3 years in the Selective Reserves.

AC Lower Time-in-Grade for Technical Service Promotions: As WOs in the field are gaining experience much faster than they did in a peacetime environment, and we are critically short CW4s and overstrength CW3s, the Army is staffing a proposal to lower the time-in-grade requirement for promotion to CW4. If approved, an additional promotion board may be held in the 1st Quarter, FY06, to consider CW3s for promotion to CW4.

Eliminate Separation Requirement for 2-time Non-select for Promotion in the Army Reserve: Current policy requires that WOs in the Army Reserve who are 2-time non-selects for promotion be separated from service. This policy has been changed to allow retention of qualified Reserve WOs in all specialties. An exception was granted for the CY05 promotion board for an additional 3 year retention of these officers, and AR 135-155 is being changed to establish the new policy.

Tenure AC CW4s: Current policy requires that AC CW4s who are 2-time non-selects for CW5 be separated, unless they are selected for continuation (SELCON), and then they can only serve to 24 years WO service (or 30 years total service, whichever occurs first). A legislative change proposal has been submitted that removes the separation and SELCON requirement for CW4s. Additionally a change has been submitted to remove the 30 years total service limit and soldiers would only be limited by total warrant officer service, which would still be capped at 24 years of WO service for CW4s and below. A legislative change package has been submitted to change the law, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) has been asked to suspend the separation policy (which he may do in wartime) until the law is changed.

As you can see, we have a lot of interest and effort being directed toward improving the accession and retention of WOs. Although none of these individual initiatives is in itself a solution to our shortages, each one of them will help us whittle them down. We will continue to work these issues, and others as they are developed, to help ensure we access, maintain and retain a healthy and relevant WO Corps.

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