



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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Message from the Chief, Army Reserve

I am writing to you all today because I have been receiving numerous emails and letters from spouses and family members regarding the current mobilization policies and their effect on our Soldiers and their families. I have been doing my best to answer every one of those communications in a timely fashion. The information I have been including in those responses really applies to every Soldier and family member, so I will share it with you all.

Our Soldiers have been mobilized under a provision in law known as Partial Mobilization Authority. That authority allows the President to mobilize up to one million members of the Ready Reserve for up to two years. The two years may be served in increments or as a single two-year period.

Shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Department of Defense implemented a policy that mobilization would not exceed one year. Initially, this was sufficient to support operations underway in Afghanistan, the Philippines and the Horn of Africa as the total number of Soldiers required was relatively low. As we prepared for operations in Iraq, this same policy of restricting mobilization for a one-year period was retained. I personally argued for a change to lengthen it to not less than 18 months to better meet the demands of the Army and the Nation. Nevertheless, the one-year policy was retained and, with it, expectations by Soldiers and their families that they would spend less than a year in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Iraq.

Now, it is commonly understood that our military successes in Iraq, while impressive, were not an accurate sign of force size or the length of time required to establish a functional government and society. Thus, the Army had to establish a policy of leaving forces on the ground longer for continuity of mission. What evolved was a one-year "boots on the ground" policy, which means serving 12 months in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Iraq, not 12 months total mobilization time. To complete pre-mobilization and post-mobilization tasks, Soldiers must be prepared for up to 18 months of total mobilization.

I am very conscious of the effects of mobilization on our Soldiers. We are working hard to restructure our force and to revise the procedures by which we use the force to provide greater predictability of mobilization. Our goal is not to mobilize a unit longer than 12-15 months within a five- to six-year window.

Further, we are working hard to keep the unit and Soldier, whenever mobilized, on active duty only for the length of time absolutely required. We now manage by individual Soldier, as well as unit, to ensure that we do not inadvertently extend or remobilize a Soldier when another Soldier is available who has not been mobilized.

We are an Army at war for a Nation at war. As Soldiers, we and our families sacrifice. I am committed to reducing and lessening that sacrifice as much as practical consistent with mission requirements. The Congress and our superiors also are very conscious of the sacrifices of our Reserve members and their families and have enacted numerous additional entitlements and benefits designed to lessen the hardships of mobilization and to recognize the sacrifices. However, there will remain sacrifice by all of us who serve and by our families. That is the nature of life in general and of life as a Soldier especially.

Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly
Chief, Army Reserve
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