ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1500

RESERVE AFFAIRS

12 AUG 2003

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-0303

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to send you the report requested by House Report 106-616, which addresses the issue of reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by members of the Reserve components when they travel to Inactive Duty Training (IDT). This report provides specific data, findings and the Department's recommendations concerning such reimbursement.

I regret the lateness of this report. However, the delay in its preparation provided an opportunity for a thorough review of data from a number of current sources. This was very beneficial as it permitted an assessment of the attitudes and needs of Reserve component members in light of recent increased and significant use of these members.

Based on our review and analysis of the IDT travel issue, the Department recommends that no legislative action be initiated at this time. Our research indicates a low return on investment for the level of funds that would be required to reimburse members for IDT travel. Additionally, such reimbursement would represent a significant, unprogrammed cost to the Department.

I trust that this report adequately addresses the concerns of the Committee. The Committee's continued interest in and support of our Reserve component members and their families are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

T. F. Hall

T. F. Hall

cc:
The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Member

REPORT ON THE REIMBURSEMENT FOR RESERVISTS' TRAVEL EXPENSES

A REPORT
TO
THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
OF
THE UNITED STATES SENATE
AND
THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Prepared by the Office of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

INTRODUCTION

This responds to a request in the House of Representatives Report 106-616, "Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2001" dated May 12, 2000. The report requests that the Secretary of Defense review the current travel practices used by Reservists to meet training obligations and determine the financial impact on members.

The report specifically requested that the Secretary assess the potential advantages for Reservists and the Reserve Components of providing reimbursement for Inactive Duty for Training (IDT) travel expenses, to include the potential for increasing retention, improving recruiting, and attracting higher quality members to leadership roles.

OVERVIEW

This response provides Department recommendations concerning the assessments listed above, pursuant to the House of Representatives Report 106-616. A separate table indicating possible IDT reimbursement funding requirements is provided as Enclosure (1) to this document.

IDT Travel Distance Policies

Current Department of Defense (DoD) IDT travel distance policies are defined in DoD Instruction 1215.18, dated July 17, 2002. Procedures set forth in the Instruction establish IDT commuting distance parameters for Guard and Reserve members. Commuting distance is defined as "the maximum distance a member of a Reserve component may be required to travel involuntarily between residence and IDT site." The actual distance is defined based on the types of IDT drills performed. If the member is assigned to a unit where they perform four IDT sessions on two consecutive days and where Government meals and quarters are provided, a 100-mile radius or a distance that may be traveled by automobile, under average conditions of traffic, weather and roads in three hours applies. If the member belongs to a unit where Government meals and quarters are not provided, the rule is a 50-mile radius of the IDT site or the distance that may be traveled by an automobile under average conditions of traffic, weather, and roads in a 1 ½-hour period. Guard and Reserve members who select to attend an IDT drill site outside the established commuting distance do so on a voluntary basis, at their own expense.

IDT Travel Reimbursement Policies

There is no provision in law that requires Guard and Reserve members to be reimbursed for IDT travel expenses. As a result, Selected Reserve members are currently expected to absorb any travel costs they incur when attending instruction at their primary IDT drill site. This practice applies to both Reservists within the established commuting distance, as well as, those who travel greater distances.

IDT Travel Target Population

Results from the 2000 Survey of Reserve Component Personnel provide a good view of the degree to which Guard and Reserve members are impacted by the IDT travel issue. Per the survey data, 83% of the Reservists live within 100 miles of their IDT drill site. In particular, 86% of the enlisted personnel (E-1 thru E-9) reported living within commuting distance. According to the survey, the vast majority of Guard and Reserve members drive themselves to their IDT drill site (96%). When asked how long it took them to get from their home to their IDT drill site, 77% of the members indicated it took them 1½ -hours or less to travel to their drill site from home. Among enlisted personnel the response was 80%.

IDT Travel Observations

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs has had no indications that reimbursement of IDT travel expenses is a significant human resources management issue. Survey results indicate that those Guard and Reserve members that travel the greatest distances and longest times to get to their drill site are, for the most part, commissioned officers at the senior ranks (O4 – O6). As a percentage of the Reserve force, this segment of the population is small. Furthermore, this segment of the Reserve Component population is in the best position financially, to afford any extra cost of the IDT travel, which they undertake voluntarily.

Based upon available data, both empirical and anecdotal, there appears to be no direct link between the IDT travel costs issue and recruiting and retention within the Reserve Components.

IDT Travel Costs

Enclosure (1) provides a listing of funding costs and options if IDT travel reimbursement was provided to Guard and Reserve members. Estimates were based on Guard and Reserve member's distance (at $0.15 per mile) from their home zip codes to the zip codes of their IDT drill sites. Average participation rates for officers (89%) and enlisted (84%) were used for additional accuracy. This cost analysis data was further sorted by mileage bands, thus providing a display of graduated cost option alternatives. If all Guard and Reserve members receive reimbursement for their travel costs, the annual cost to the Services would exceed **$197,000,000**. If a lower cost option is applied (only reimburse members who live more than 50 miles from their IDT drill site) the annual cost would approach $**151,000,000**. Either option represents an unprogramed and unfunded cost to the Department.

SUMMARY

There is minimal data to support the contention that there is, a real or perceived significant personnel issue concerning reimbursement of IDT travel expenses. We have not identified a direct link between this issue and recruiting and retention efforts within the Reserve components. Based on our research and cost estimates, there appears to be minimal return on investment for DoD to introduce an IDT travel reimbursement program. As such, the Department does not support a legislative initiative to provide Guard and Reserve members with reimbursement for costs incurred while traveling to and from their IDT drill sites. However, if in the future, there is a need for a change in DoD policy or Federal Statute, we will modify current policy or introduce an appropriate legislative initiative through the Department's annual legislation program.

ENCLOSURE (1)

REIMBURSEMENT OF RESERVE IDT TRAVEL - ANNUAL COST ESTIMATES

Reserve Component	Authorized Strength (less AGR & MT)	Total Personnel participating	Mile Bands	Avg Distance	Officers	Officer IDT Participation	Enlisted	Enlisted IDT Participation	Monthly Travel Cost	Annual Travel Cost
DoD Total					116,927	89%	691,015	84%	$0.15	
			<50	25	69,179	61,569	525,553	441,465	$3,772,754	$45,273,045
			50 - 100	75	16,240	14,454	95,747	80,427	$2,134,824	$25,617,892
			100 - 199	150	14,160	12,602	55,028	46,224	$2,647,166	$31,765,997
			200 - 299	250	5,254	4,676	17,470	14,675	$1,451,315	$17,415,774
			300 - 499	400	5,200	4,628	11,794	9,907	$1,744,195	$20,930,342
			>500	600	13,749	12,237	16,390	13,768	$4,680,758	$56,169,094
			>50		**54,603**	**48,597**	**196,429**	**165,000**	**$12,658,258**	**$151,899,098**
			All		**123,782**	**110,166**	**721,982**	**606,465**	**$29,089,270**	**$197,172,143**