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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

April 14, 2004

The Honorable John W. Warner, Chairman
The Honorable Carl Levin, Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Duncan Hunter, Chairman,
The Honorable Ike Skelton, Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Subject: *GAO Review of Frequent Short-Term Deployments*

This letter confirms our commitment to study the Department of Defense's special pays and allowances for service members who are frequently deployed away from their permanent duty stations for periods of less than 30 days based on Conference Report: H.R. 108-354 (H.R. 1588), pages 134 and 713. In our December 30, 2003 letter to you, we outlined our approach to designing the study. Based on that design and as agreed in discussions with your staff on March 10 and April 1, 2004, we will complete our work and issue a report to you by June 30, 2004. We provided information regarding the critical job elements to your staff. The enclosure to this letter sets forth the understanding reached with your staff on the key aspects of the study.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on this assignment. Should you have any questions, please contact me on (202) 512-5559 or Brenda Farrell, Assistant Director, on (202) 512-3604. We can also be reached at stewartd@gao.gov and farrellb@gao.gov, respectively.

Derek B. Stewart
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Enclosure

cc: Dick Walsh, Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Personnel
Gary Leeling, Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Personnel
John Chapla, House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Total Force
Michael Higgins, House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Total Force
Debra Wada, House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Total Force

Terms of the Work

Objectives/Key Questions

The overall objectives of this review are to evaluate the Department of Defense's (DOD) special pays and allowances for military personnel frequently deployed for less than 30-days from their permanent duty stations. Key questions are: (1) What is the rationale for family separation allowance eligibility requirements, including the 30-day threshold? (2) To what extent has DOD identified frequent short-term deployments as a family separation allowance issue? and (3) What special pays and allowances are available to service members frequently deployed for less than 30 days and to what extent is DOD making use of them?

Scope

The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Policy, Office of Military Compensation; the Office of the Secretary of the Army; the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force; the Office of the Secretary of the Navy; the National Guard Bureau; Air Force Reserve Headquarters; Air Guard Headquarters; the Air Force Personnel Command; the Air Mobility Command; Dover Air Force Base; and Travis Air Force Base.

Methodology

(1) We will review the legislative history as well as DOD guidance and regulations governing the administration of the family separation allowance. We will discuss the eligibility requirements for family separation allowance with the appropriate DOD officials. (2) We will review and analyze any proposals about family separation allowance made as part of DOD 's Unified Legislative and Budgeting process and analyze supporting documentation. (3) We will identify special pays and allowances that do not have a time eligibility factor through the DOD's Military Compensation Background Papers, legislative research on special pays and allowances, and discussions with DOD officials. We will review the legislative history regarding recent legislative changes and how DOD has implemented these changes.

This work will be done in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Product Type

We will issue a report. We will obtain comments from DOD on a written draft of this product prior to issuance.

Product Delivery Date(s)

We will issue a report by June 30, 2004.

Special Conditions

Because this work is based on a congressional mandate, the report cannot be restricted in any manner.

Reporting on Job Status

We will keep your staff apprised as we proceed with our work and will be available to brief your staff upon request.