

# Qualitative Service Program (QSP)

## Frequently Asked Questions

May 28, 2015

### Policy

**Q:** Why did the Army create a QSP and what is it?

**A:** Active duty NCOs, upon attaining the rank of SSG, continue to serve in a voluntary indefinite status once they reenlist with over 10 years of active federal service. These NCOs continue to serve on active duty consistent with the retention control point (RCP) for the rank they hold. Depending on their rank, the maximum period of service may extend up to 35 years. Combined with promotion timing (pin-on points), RCPs establish specific leader development gateways used to facilitate development of a professional NCO Corps. When faced with rapid structure reductions, the Army cannot achieve balance (by skill and grade) by natural attrition alone. It became evident a force shaping process was needed in order to preserve viable career path opportunities across all MOSs within an All-Volunteer force.

By both statute (10 USC §1169 and §1171 for RA Soldiers, and 10 USC §12313(a) and §12681 for RC Soldiers) and policy (AR 635-200, chapter 16-7), the Secretary of the Army (or his/her designee) may authorize involuntary separation when authorization limitations, strength restrictions, or budgetary constraints require the active duty enlisted force to be reduced in number. What the Army did not have was a formal process; hence, the development of the QSP.

In early 2010, it became evident that the Army would not achieve mandated end strength requirements through natural attrition or reduced accessions alone, and it was going to be necessary for currently serving, combat-seasoned Soldiers, to leave active service involuntarily. In support of all of the ongoing leader development and talent management efforts, the Army decision was to create a formal process that would retain highly qualified Soldiers with the greatest potential for future contributions to the Army while concurrently shaping the inventory by skill and grade in response to falling requirements. Since 1969, a centralized selection process (HQDA Board) identifies enlisted Soldiers with the greatest potential as best qualified for promotion. The Army has great confidence in this process and it has passed the test of time. Consequently, the Army decided to incorporate this time-tested and equitable process to qualitatively identify and retain Soldiers against quantitative requirements. This became the QSP.

The QSP board convenes under the construct of a Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) that outlines the board mission. The MOI provides guidelines to the board members to consider files of Soldiers in select MOSs (those that are excess of projected requirements) who are subject to denial of continued service. The objective of the selection process is to meet the leadership and management needs of the Army and the Department of Defense by selecting NCOs who, when compared against their contemporaries, do not have the greatest potential for future contributions to the Army.

These Soldiers are quality Soldiers the Army would otherwise retain, but cannot do so because of reducing requirements. In the long run, the board process improves NCO grade and MOS readiness levels in support of force structure requirements, enhances the quality of the NCO Corps by retaining NCOs who have been identified as having the greatest potential for future contributions to the Army, and supports sustainment of viable career path opportunities across grades and MOSs in an effort to sustain an All-Volunteer force.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

**Q:** Who is eligible for QSP?

**A:** All Soldiers whose Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) are formally announced by MILPER Message and who meet the following criteria:

All CSM/SGM with at least three years in grade and less than 31 years of active federal service as of the scheduled board date.

All 1SG/MSG with at least four years in grade and less than 28 years of active federal service as of the scheduled board date.

All SFC with at least four years in grade and less than 25 years of active federal service as of the scheduled board date.

All SSG with at least four years in grade who are not within one year of their Retention Control Point (RCP) or Expiration of Term of Service (ETS) (whichever is later) as of the scheduled board date.

**Q:** Who is ineligible for QSP consideration?

**A:** Soldiers with approved retirements as of an established date (specified in the board announcement message); Soldiers who reside on a HQDA selection list (to include Soldiers in a promotable status to the next higher grade, MSG previously selected to attend the Sergeants Major Course for the purpose of promotion to SGM, and Soldiers slated to a specific CSM position). Because the Nominative CSM/SGM List is a selection of fully-qualified candidates (who may be potential future selects), these Soldiers are still subject to QSP if the other criteria is met; Soldiers who do not possess a PMOS as announced (specified in the board announcement message).

## **Notification of Separation under the QSP**

**Q:** How is notification made?

**A:** HRC will forward memorandums of notification to the appropriate Commanding General of the Soldier's ACOM/ASCC/DRU, who may delegate notification responsibility down to the LTC commander level. ACOM/ASCC/DRU or Joint Command

G1/J1 will be responsible to ensure Soldiers are notified and have returned the acknowledgement of notification to HRC.

**Q:** What are the options when notified?

**A:** Soldiers will be informed of specific options tailored to them depending on how many years of active service they will have at the time of separation. The options available to each Soldier will be identified in their memorandum of notification. All options are listed below:

1. Elect voluntary retirement in lieu of separation.
2. Soldiers with 18 but less than 20 years of service as of the separation date will have the option to be retained until reaching 20 years active service.
3. Elect voluntary retirement under the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA).
4. Acknowledge that the Soldier will be separated on the date identified.
5. Elect early separation.
6. Appeal (limited to material error) and request retention on active duty.
7. Identify assignment to a Warrior Transition Unit or enrollment in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System.
8. Identify that the Soldier is deployed and anticipated redeployment date.
9. Reclassification to a new MOS as determined by Army requirements and individual qualifications.

## **Appeals**

**Q:** What constitutes eligibility for appeal?

**A:** Appeals are limited to newly discovered evidence, the subsequent removal of documents from the Soldier's Army Military Human Resources Record (AMHRR), and/or material error in the AMHRR when reviewed by the selection. Those appeals which do not meet these criteria will be disapproved by HRC and the QSP separation date will remain firm. Those appeals which meet these criteria will be forwarded to the next QSP board for review in accordance with the board guidance. The separation date announced in the notification memorandum may be adjusted by HRC to allow time for the appeal to be reviewed by the next QSP board.

**Q:** What determines a material error?

**A:** Error is considered material when there is a reasonable chance that had the error not existed, the Soldier may not have been selected under QSP. The rules used to establish Standby Advisory Board Eligibility are also used for the purpose of determining QSP appeal eligibility. These rules are found in AR 600-8-19, Enlisted Promotions and Reductions, Section IV, paragraph 4-13.

**Q:** What is the process to submit an appeal?

**A:** Soldiers will submit requests for appeal in a memorandum specifically identifying what the appeal is based on and providing any supporting documentation if applicable. The appeal must be submitted through the chain of command to include the General Court Martial Convening Authority or general officer commander who must recommend approval or disapproval of the appeal and forward the request with comments and/or endorsement to Commander, Human Resources Command (AHRC-EPF-M), 1600 Spearhead Division Avenue, Fort Knox, KY 40122. The request should be scanned and sent via email to [usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.epmd-transition-branch@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.epmd-transition-branch@mail.mil) within 30 days of receipt of notification.

**Q:** Is there any recourse to a denied appeal?

**A:** If the Soldier's appeal is denied and he/she feels this is unjust, the proper forum to appeal is the Army Review Boards Agency (ARBA), Army Board for Correction of Military Records (ABCMR). The ABCMR operates pursuant to law (10 USC § 1552) within the Office of the Secretary of the Army. The ABCMR consists of civilians regularly employed in the executive part of the Department of the Army who are appointed by the Secretary of the Army. The ABCMR considers individual applications that are properly brought before it, and, in appropriate cases, it directs or recommends correction of military records to remove an error or injustice. The ARBA homepage is located at <http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/>.

An application submitted to the ABCMR does not interfere with the involuntary separation date.

## **Assignment Considerations**

**Q:** Are Soldiers selected for QSP eligible for a permanent change of station (PCS)?

**A:** Soldiers who have been denied continued service under QSP and who do not have an approved retirement may be placed on assignment to any location for which they meet the service remaining requirement.

Soldiers who have been denied continued service under QSP and who have an approved retirement may only be reassigned from OCONUS TO CONUS, if the service remaining requirement for PCS to CONUS is met at the time of their DEROS.

Contact your career branch manager for any questions regarding your assignment eligibility.

**Q:** Are Command Sergeants Major selected for separation under the QSP authorized to be released from their position prior to their Primary Change of Responsibility Date (PCORD)?

**A:** Yes. A CSM may request to be removed from their CSM position in order to separate earlier than the separation date identified in the notification memorandum. The request will be coordinated with the HRC Command Management Branch and CSM/SGM Branch. The new PCORD date will be determined based on the availability of a replacement for the CSM position. Once early removal is approved and the PCORD has been adjusted, the CSM's separation date under the QSP will be adjusted to the new PCORD +6 months or the standard QSP separation date (12 months from the date the QSP separation was approved), whichever date is later.

**Q:** Are Soldiers selected for separation under QSP eligible for a compassionate reassignment?

**A:** Yes. If a Soldier wishes to apply for a compassionate reassignment the request will be submitted on a DA Form 3739 (Application for Compassionate Actions). The unit S1 will forward the request to the HRC Compassionate Section team box at [usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.epmd-compassionate-section@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.epmd-compassionate-section@mail.mil).

## **Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) and Soldiers Enrolled in the Integrated Disability System (IDES)**

**Q:** Are Soldiers who are assigned to a WTU as a patient or enrolled in the IDES eligible to remain on active duty beyond the established separation date identified in the notification memorandum?

**A:** Yes. Soldiers assigned to a WTU as a patient will be retained until final disposition of their medical condition(s) to include completion of the IDES and medical separation processing, if applicable. Soldiers not assigned or attached to a WTU as a patient, but currently in the IDES, will be retained until final disposition of the medical care or board process. Those found fit for duty will be processed for separation under the QSP no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the seventh month following the fit for duty finding or the standard QSP separation date (12 months from the date the QSP separation was approved), whichever date is later.

## **Retirement**

**Q:** Can Soldiers retire in lieu of QSP consideration?

**A:** Yes. Soldiers may request voluntary retirement in lieu of QSP consideration under any provision of law for which the Soldier is otherwise eligible. Soldiers with approved retirements dated after announcement of a scheduled board or in lieu of board consideration are prohibited from withdrawing the retirement at a later date except for extreme compassionate/hardship reasons.

**Q:** What retirement options are available to Soldiers selected for involuntary separation under the QSP?

**A:** A Soldier may request voluntary retirement under any provision of law for which he/she is otherwise eligible.

**Twenty-year Retirement:** A Soldier who has completed 20 but less than 30 years of active federal service (AFS) in the U.S. Armed Forces may be retired at his or her request. Voluntary retirement will be approved for the date requested by the Soldier except retirement will be effective no later than the mandatory separation date identified in the notification memorandum and will ordinarily be no earlier than 90 days from the date the Soldier elects this option. (AR 635-200, paragraph 12-4)

Eligible USAR AGR Soldiers with 20 years or more of active federal service (AFS) may elect voluntary REFRAD with concurrent transfer to the retired reserve. Such REFRAD will occur 90 days after the Soldier receives pre-separation counseling.

**Eligible USAR AGR Soldiers with Eighteen Years Reserve Creditable Service but less than 20-Years:** Will be considered eligible for a non-regular Retirement upon completion of 20 years. Upon verification, HRC will extend the ETS of the Soldier to enable the Soldier the required time to earn enough credit for a non-regular retirement. The Soldier may elect to remain on active duty, REFRAD, and transfer to the IRR, IMA or TPU in order to complete their 20-year service obligation. Soldiers are afforded the first retirement option available to them.

**Eighteen Years AFS:** A Soldier who has at least 18 years of AFS (as of the date designated for involuntary separation) will be retained on active duty until the Soldier is eligible for retirement (AR 635-200, paragraph 12-13). Soldiers who fail to submit requests for voluntary retirement and are retained under this provision will be discharged for the convenience of the government upon attainment of 20 years of AFS. In lieu of remaining on active duty to attain 20 years AFS, the Soldier may request retirement under the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA).

**Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA):** A Soldier who has at least 15 years but less than 20 years of AFS (as of the date designated for involuntary separation) may request retirement under TERA for a date not to exceed the mandatory separation date identified in the notification memorandum and no earlier than 90 days from the date the Soldier elects this option or attains 15 years AFS, whichever is later. (Army Directive 2013-14 and MILPER Message 13-231)

**Q:** Are Soldiers selected for involuntary separation under the QSP authorized to request retirement outside the normal 9-12 month submission window?

**A:** Yes. Soldier's identified for involuntary separation under the QSP may, as an exception to policy, submit for retirement upon notification regardless of the identified separation date being outside the 9-12 month submission window.

## **Involuntary Separation**

**Q:** Are Soldiers entitled to separation benefits if they are not eligible for retirement?

**A:** Yes. Soldiers with more than 6 but less than 20 years of Active Federal Service as a result of involuntary separation under the provisions of the QSP may be entitled to full involuntary separation pay (10 USC § 1174). Soldiers must meet all the other eligibility criteria as listed in DoD Financial Management Regulation (DoD 7000.14-R Volume 7A Chapter 35). Soldiers denied continued service by a QSP board are entitled to Transition Assistance (TA) benefits. Soldiers will be issued a DD Form 2765 Identification Card and DD Form 1173 for their dependents. Benefits provide two years of exchange and commissary privileges and medical (TRICARE) for 180 days (10 USC § 1145 Health Benefits).

**Q:** Are Soldiers selected for involuntary separation eligible to submit a request for reclassification?

**A:** SSGs approved for involuntary separation may seek voluntary reclassification into a shortage MOS. All requests to reclassify must be approved by AHRC within 30 days of the Soldier's QSP notification memorandum. When a Soldier cannot be scheduled for a funded training seat that starts within six months of the notification memorandum, involuntary separation orders will be issued. Soldiers who attend MOS training will have their separation suspended pending completion of the course and award of the new MOS. Failure to complete the course will result in the involuntary separation date being adjusted to the date the Soldier reverts to his/her previous MOS plus six months or the original separation date identified in the notification memorandum, whichever is later.

## **Bonus and Education Benefits**

**Q:** Are Soldiers selected for separation under the QSP who have a service remaining obligation as a result of an enlistment or selective reenlistment bonus required to pay back the unearned portion of the bonus?

**A:** No. Bonus repayment of any unearned portions will not be sought and any unpaid installments will be made to the member in a lump sum.

**Q:** Are Soldiers selected for separation under the QSP eligible to retain their post 9-11 GI Bill Transfer of Education Benefit (TEB)?

**A:** Yes, provided the TEB was accomplished prior to selection for separation under the QSP. In order to retain the ability to transfer unused Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to family members, any NCO who may be selected for denial of continued service by a QSP board must commit to the required additional duty service obligation prior to the board approval date as established by the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1. Because board approval dates vary, eligible NCOs are advised to ensure they take the necessary steps to retain

transferability of their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits as soon as possible. Post-9/11 GI Bill transfer is not authorized once the Soldier has been identified for involuntary separation and can no longer meet the service remaining requirement. Noncommissioned officers are encouraged to contact the appropriate approving official located on the TEB webpage [http://gibill.va.gov/benefits/post\\_911\\_gibill/transfer\\_of\\_benefits.html](http://gibill.va.gov/benefits/post_911_gibill/transfer_of_benefits.html). There are no exceptions to this provision.

## **Miscellaneous**

**Q:** If discharged under the QSP, are Soldiers eligible to come back into the Army at a later date?

**A:** Yes. It is possible that the Soldier can come back at a later date if eligible. The Soldier's DD Form 214 will be annotated with a reentry code (RE Code) of "1" (Qualified for enlistment if all other criteria are met).

**Q:** Why are Soldiers who have an outstanding record being selected for involuntary separation under the QSP?

**A:** The Army recognizes and acknowledges that as we reduce the number of Soldiers in certain over-strength MOSs and/or MOSs with little opportunity for promotion, we will be losing quality Soldiers who have served our country and our Army well during combat. The board will have instructions to ensure we identify and keep the right Soldiers and recognize we will lose some very good Soldiers in order to meet force structure requirements.

**Q:** Can a Soldier volunteer to be considered by a QSP board?

**A:** No. Currently the program is being used as a force restructuring tool with the primary concern being to reshape the Army by MOS and grade.

**Q:** Is it possible to identify why a Soldier was selected by a QSP board?

**A:** No. Board deliberations are not available for release.

**Q:** Can a Soldier change his/her QSP option selection after signing the statement of options form?

**A:** Yes. The primary purpose of selecting an option is to have a written verification that the Soldier was officially notified of his/her selection under QSP. It also is a tool to ensure the Soldier is aware of the options available based on his/her particular situation. The QSP acknowledgement form is not a binding document. Changing a previously selected option will not generate or cause an adjustment to the original separation date cited in the notification memorandum. The option form is not used as a tool to request retirement or separation. That must be done as a separate request using form DA-4187.

**Q:** What can the command do if a Soldier refuses to sign the QSP acknowledgement notification?

**A:** If a Soldier refuses to sign the acknowledgement notification, the notifying official will enter the following statement on the document "Soldier presented with QSP selection results on (date) and refuses to sign".

**Q:** Can a Soldier's command request a delay to the QSP involuntary separation date?

**A:** Yes.

The command may request a delay in the separation date to allow for completion of a court martial, civil trial, an ongoing investigation or an administrative involuntary separation under AR 635-200.

The command may also request a delay in the separation date to allow for medical evaluation processing under the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) should the Soldier be enrolled in the IDES after the notification of separation under the QSP.

**Q:** How much money will a Soldier be eligible to receive if involuntarily separated with less than 15 years or if retired under the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA)?

**A:** Questions regarding monetary entitlements should be addressed with the Soldier's servicing finance office.