



DoD INSTRUCTION 1304.25

FULFILLING THE MILITARY SERVICE OBLIGATION

Originating Component: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

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Purpose: In accordance with the authority in DoD Directive 5124.02, this issuance establishes policy; assigns responsibilities; provides procedures; and updates the requirements, conditions, and restrictions for fulfilling the statutory military service obligation (MSO).

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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. APPLICABILITY.

This issuance applies to OSD, the Military Departments (including the Coast Guard at all times, including when it is a Service in the Department of Homeland Security by agreement with that Department), the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD.

1.2. POLICY.

Every person who enters military service by enlistment or appointment incurs an MSO of 8 years from that entry date, pursuant to Section 651 of Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C). Exceptions to this requirement are specified in Paragraph 3.11.

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS (USD(P&R)).

The USD(P&R) establishes policy and prescribes procedures for the implementation of this issuance.

2.2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS.

Under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(P&R), the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs develops additional implementation guidance for this issuance.

2.3. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS (ASD(HA)).

Under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(P&R), the ASD(HA) establishes a list of critical officer skills needed to meet DoD health professional specialty shortages.

2.4. SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS AND COMMANDANT OF THE COAST GUARD.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Commandant of the Coast Guard:

- a. Establish procedures for fulfilling the MSO.
- b. Maintain adequate and current personnel records on members of the Reserve Components, including:
 - (1) Mailing address.
 - (2) Physical condition.
 - (3) Military qualifications.
 - (4) Dependency status.
 - (5) Civilian occupational skills.
 - (6) Availability for service.
 - (7) Other information needed to determine strength levels of the Military Services, in accordance with Section 10204 of Title 10, U.S.C.

c. Determine applicable training requirements for Service members transferred to the Individual Ready Reserve with a remaining MSO.

d. Develop procedures for:

(1) Implementing waivers of the 8-year MSO for individuals affiliated with the Selected Reserve (SELRES).

(2) Those appointed as commissioned officers in critically short health professional specialties published by the ASD(HA).

SECTION 3: PROCEDURES

3.1. THE MSO.

When a Service member fails to complete the MSO while on active duty in the Active or Reserve Components, the Secretary concerned will determine the combination of periods of active or inactive status to fulfill the remainder of the MSO in the Reserve Component, pursuant to Section 651 of Title 10, U.S.C.

3.2. DISCHARGE OR SEPARATION FOLLOWED BY RE-ENTRY.

Service periods before and after discharges and separations, which are immediately followed by entry in an Active or Reserve Component's accession program, count as continuous time towards fulfilling the MSO.

3.3. DISCHARGE OF MSO.

When the Secretary concerned determines that a Service member has no potential for service as prescribed in accordance with Section 12301 of Title 10, U.S.C., the Service member may be discharged before fulfilling the MSO. Policies for such discharges are specified in DoD Instructions (DoDIs) 1200.15, 1215.13, and 1332.14.

3.4. DELAYED ENTRY.

Service members in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) and in delayed entry into training (DET) incur an MSO. The period served in such status counts toward fulfillment of the MSO.

a. DEP.

Persons who enlist in the Ready Reserve in accordance with Section 513 of Title 10, U.S.C., and agree to a subsequent enlistment in an Active Component of the Military Services are in the DEP. DEP members who fail to enlist in an Active Component of the Military Services:

- (1) May be ordered to involuntary initial active duty training (IADT).
- (2) Will complete the remainder of the MSO in a Reserve Component, unless discharged in accordance with DoDI 1332.14.

b. DET.

Persons who enlist in the Ready Reserve, in accordance with Section 12103(d) of Title 10, U.S.C., for service in a Reserve Component, and whose IADT is postponed, are in DET. DET members who fail to report for IADT:

- (1) May be ordered to involuntary IADT.

(2) Will complete the remainder of the MSO in a Reserve Component, unless discharged in accordance with DoDI 1332.14.

c. Discharge from the DEP and DET.

The DEP and DET members who are discharged for any of the reasons specified in DoDI 1332.14 are not credited for service incurred in fulfillment of the MSO. Any future enlistment or appointment of such persons will be treated as an original entry into military service and incurs an 8-year MSO.

3.5. UNDERAGE ENTRY.

A Service member whose enlistment or appointment is declared void because the Service member is underage, and who is released as the result of such action, may not be considered to have acquired an MSO.

a. Military service rendered under a void underage enlistment, when characterized as “honorable” by the Secretary concerned, is creditable toward fulfilling any subsequent MSO that the Service member acquires. This credit will not alter the terms of any subsequent enlistment for specific periods of Active Component or Reserve Component service.

b. Paragraph 3.4.c. applies if the service described in that paragraph was performed only in a delayed entry status.

c. Procedures of underage enlistments are prescribed in DoDI 1332.14.

3.6. RESERVE OFFICERS’ TRAINING CORPS (ROTC) APPOINTMENT.

ROTC scholarship recipients and ROTC advanced training appointees incur an MSO of 8 years from the date of appointment as commissioned officers.

3.7. SERVICE ACADEMY APPOINTMENTS.

A cadet or midshipman appointment in accordance with Sections 7441a, 8453, or 9441a of Title 10, U.S.C., incur an MSO of 8 years from the date of commissioning. If an appointment is terminated before graduation or if a cadet or midshipman refuses to accept a commission offer following graduation, the MSO is equal to the period for which the Service member is ordered to serve on active duty or in a Reserve Component, in accordance with:

a. Sections 7448, 8459, or 9448 of Title 10, U.S.C.

b. DoDIs 1322.22 and 1235.12.

3.8. UNSATISFACTORY PARTICIPATION IN THE READY RESERVE.

A person who incurs an MSO and subsequently fails to participate satisfactorily in any required Reserve training may not be discharged, except in accordance with Paragraph 3.3.

3.9. INTER-SERVICE AND INTER-COMPONENT TRANSFERS.

The transfer of Service members who have a remaining MSO between Military Services or components of a Military Service must be in accordance with DoDI 1300.04. Obligated military service performed before and after an authorized transfer counts toward fulfillment of the MSO.

3.10. MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY.

A Service member may be discharged from a Reserve Component of any of the Military Services and their MSO, if the Service member, in accordance with DoDI 1200.15:

- a. Becomes a member of the clergy.
- b. Satisfactorily establishes, in writing, all four of the conditions specified in this paragraph.
 - (1) The ministry is their primary vocation.
 - (2) Their religious faith group is substantially recognized for religious purposes.
 - (3) Their standing in the faith group is recognized as that of a minister or leader.
 - (4) They are certified by an applicable official or the faith group to be a fully qualified member of the clergy in good standing.

3.11. EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY.

Exceptions to the policy of this issuance are specified in this paragraph.

- a. In times of war or national emergency, as declared by Congress, enlistments in the National Guard and Reserve continue until 6 months after the end of such war or emergency, unless the Secretary concerned terminates them sooner, in accordance with Section 12103 of Title 10, U.S.C.
- b. When a person is appointed as a commissioned officer in a critically short health professional specialty, as designated by the Secretary concerned, the minimum period of obligated service for an officer in accordance with Section 651 of Title 10, U.S.C., is the greater of:

- (1) 2 years; or

(2) In the case of an officer who accepts an accession bonus or executes a contract or agreement for the multi-year receipt of special pay for service in a Military Service, the period of obligated service specified in the contract or agreement.

c. In either of the following two cases, the Secretary concerned may grant a waiver allowing the 8-year MSO originally incurred by a Service member to be reduced to 6 years:

(1) When a Service member who is released from an Active Component with a remaining MSO directly affiliates with the SELRES and participates in accordance with Section 10147 of Title 10, U.S.C.

(2) When an Inactive Ready Reserve member who previously served in an active status and has a remaining MSO participates in accordance with Section 10147 of Title 10, U.S.C.

GLOSSARY

G.1. ACRONYMS.

ACRONYM	MEANING
ASD(HA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
DEP	Delayed Entry Program
DET	delayed entry into training
DoDI	DoD instruction
IADT	initial active duty training
MSO	military service obligation
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SELRES	Selected Reserve
U.S.C.	United States Code
USD(P&R)	Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

G.2. DEFINITIONS.

Unless otherwise noted, these terms and their definitions are for the purpose of this issuance.

TERM	DEFINITION
active status	Defined in Section 101 of Title 10, U.S.C.
discharge	Complete severance from all military status gained by an enlistment, appointment, or induction.
enlisted member	Defined in Section 101 of Title 10, U.S.C.
enlistment	The voluntary initial entry of a person as an enlisted member into any of the Military Services.
IADT	Defined in DoDI 1215.06.
inactive status	Defined in Section 10152 of Title 10, U.S.C.

TERM	DEFINITION
Military Departments	Defined in Section 101 of Title 10, U.S.C.
MSO	The total required years of service that each person who becomes a member of a Military Service must serve under the regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Military Department concerned.
officer	Defined in Section 101 of Title 10, U.S.C.
Ready Reserve	Defined in Section 10142 of Title 10, U.S.C.
Reserve Component	Defined in the DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.
SELRES	Defined in Section 10143 of Title 10, U.S.C.
separation	A general term that includes: Discharge. Release from active duty. Release from custody and control of the Military Services. Transfer to the Inactive Ready Reserve. Similar changes in active or reserve status.
underage	A Service member who is: Below 17 years of age; or 17 years of age but enlists without parental consent.

REFERENCES

- DoD Directive 5124.02, “Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)),” June 23, 2008
- DoD Instruction 1200.15, “Assignment to and Transfer Between Reserve Categories and Discharge from Reserve Status,” November 7, 2019
- DoD Instruction 1215.06, “Uniform Reserve, Training, and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components,” March 11, 2014, as amended
- DoD Instruction 1215.13, “Ready Reserve Member Participation Policy,” May 5, 2015
- DoD Instruction 1235.12, “Accessing the Reserve Components (RC),” June 7, 2016, as amended
- DoD Instruction 1300.04, “Inter-Service and Inter-Component Transfers of Service Members,” July 25, 2017
- DoD Instruction 1322.22, “Service Academies,” September 24, 2015
- DoD Instruction 1332.14, “Enlisted Administrative Separations,” January 27, 2014, as amended
- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,” current edition
- United States Code, Title 10