FORSCOM CG's AUSA Institute of Land Warfare Panel: *Transition the Reserve Component to an Operational Force* 

Questions for the Panel from the audience, with the Panel's response:

1. Q: Can we eliminate or at least significantly reduce the use of derivative UIC mobilizations – that break units and render the remaining portions of the units incapable of meeting mission requirements?

A: Under condition of reduced demand, the diminished use of derivative UICs may be possible. The Secretary of Defense's 19 January 2007 memo, "Total Force Utilization," directed that RC units be deployed as cohesive units. Accordingly, the Army and the RC are taking measures to stabilize units by reducing the number of Soldiers that are cross-leveled between units. For example, the ARNG routinely fills personnel shortages within large formations (Brigade) with units from other states in order to preserve unit cohesion. Assigning Soldiers to fill shortages with volunteers continues where necessary, but this practice is utilized only with the consent of the Soldiers' TAGs and this is done only as a last resort.

2. Q: We train as a team, mob as a team. What is being done to prevent splitting up these teams? ("We want the Soldiers but we don't need the leadership" type of deployments.)

A: This phenomenon grows out the requirement to meet COCOM requirements in theater. FORSCOM in collaboration with JFCOM, the Joint Force Provider, continues to work with those responsible for generating requests for forces to ensure compliance with modular design principles. Also, RC leadership makes every effort to mobilize units in accordance with the 19 January 2007 SecDef memo, "Utilizing the Total Force." For instance, all ARNG brigades for 2008 and 2009 will deploy as brigades. When personnel cross-leveling is still required, the goal is to prioritize using task organization of teams, squads, or platoons rather than individual fillers.

3. Q: To what extent do the BRAC 05 decisions affect the transition of the Reserve Component to an operational force?

A: BRAC is the law of the land and will be implemented by the Army on the timeline specified. It refers to the process the Department of Defense (DOD) has used to reorganize its installation infrastructure to more efficiently and effectively provide the Army with the authority to dispose of excess facilities and installations while realigning and reconfiguring the remaining infrastructure to increase operational capacity, warfighting capability and to take advantage of the efficiencies presented through consolidation and joint activities. BRAC realigns base facilities with the modular units of the future force.

With regard to overall Army transformation, it is important to note that Army BRAC recommendations are linked to the Army future force initiatives. BRAC realignments will provide the optimum infrastructure to stand up, train, support and rapidly deploy our Brigade Combat Teams. BRAC provides the primary mechanism and basis for locating our forces on installations that facilitate rapid deployment in support of global requirements against potential adversaries who threaten our security.

Army BRAC execution will enable the transformation of the reserve component as well as the rebalancing of forces. Specifically, BRAC directed closure of 211 ARNG and 175 USAR facilities, but directed a total of 125 new joint facilities potentially available to station and train RC forces. These measures directly enhance our ability to transition the RC to an operational force. BRAC 05 was the catalyst for the Army Reserve to complete its full analysis of the structure that is needed to support the BRAC directives as well as fully support the manning, equipping, and training of its forces to meet ARFORGEN requirements.

4. Q: Because of record demand and limited supply, PSYOP has the fastest OPTEMPO in the RC. Attempts to stand up new battalions have resulted in new slots but no bodies to fill them. With these "givens" projected to remain constant for the foreseeable future, how will it be possible under the ARFORGEN model to leave PSYOP units in the Reset/Train pool for four years?

A: The PSYOP specialty is one of several high demand / low density skills that will continue to experience high OPTEMPO until the terror threat is defeated. Achieving the 1:4 ARFORGEN employment goal for PYSOP units will remain challenging until either demand declines or PYSOP structure is increased. In 2006, the Army approved the redesign of USAR PSYOP structure and an accompanying increase in end strength. Between fiscal years 2008 and 2011, the USAR PSYOP force will increase from six to eight battalions, and from 18 to 32 companies; during the same period, end strength will increase by more than 1,200 Soldiers.

5. Q: What tax incentives for employers are being considered to assist employers as they support the Guard and Reserve?

A: Recently, there have been several bills introduced in Congress that would provide tax incentives to employers of National Guard and Reserve members. Changes to the tax code are the purview of the Department of Treasury; hence DoD has referred the question of tax incentives to Treasury. It is important to understand that some companies that employ RC Soldiers have fewer than 50 workers. Therefore, tax incentives may not necessarily be the optimal way to recognize employer support. Additionally, OSD is surveying employers to identify the key incentives needed to retain employer support. In December 2008, RAND Arroyo is expected to publish the findings of a study designed to identify similar critical incentives.

6. Q: Could the military offer TriCare For Life to mobilized Reserve forces?

A: No. TRICARE For Life insurance (see definition below) provides coverage to all Medicare-eligible TRICARE beneficiaries. However, healthcare for mobilized Selected Reserve members consists of a variety of options including a premobilization TRICARE benefit – available 90 days prior to mobilization; Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) – available for 180 days after separating from active duty on a contingency order; line of duty care; TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) – provides standard coverage for all Selected Reserve and their family members for a monthly premium; the Continued Healthcare Benefit Program (CHCBP) – provides coverage for a monthly premium after Selected Reserve members separate from active duty; and Department of Veteran's Affairs – provides eligible veterans hospital care and outpatient care services. The Office of the Surgeon General provided additional information on TRICARE for Life and healthcare coverage for mobilized RC Soldiers, which can be found at the end of this document.<sup>1</sup>

7. Q: Are there any plans to increase utilization of the IRR in order to reduce cross-leveling and maintain unit integrity in the Selective Reserves?

A: As of 14 October 2007, there were 2,813 Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Soldiers who were involuntarily mobilized, and an additional 498 who were voluntarily mobilized. Since 9/11, 17,225 IRR Soldiers have been mobilized in support of contingency operations (7,675 voluntarily and 9,550 involuntarily). These contingency mobilizations were necessitated by validated operational requirements and demonstrate the important role IRR Soldiers play in meeting manning requirements.

That said, the IRR was reduced in size by 1/3 over the last four years, and its future role is under review. But it is clear that operationalizing the RC, which will enhance resourcing, will produce fully equipped and fully trained units. This has the effect of reducing the need for IRR Soldiers. It is reasonable to expect, however, that IRR Soldiers will continue to be needed to fill individual augmentee positions on Joint Manning Documents and other staffs.

The ARNG plans to expand use of the Inactive Army National Guard (ING). The plan calls for Soldiers with remaining mandatory service obligations to be transferred to the ING rather than the IRR to serve the remainder of their obligation. This will allow States to maintain contact with these Soldiers and allow them to deploy with a unit if needed.

Current Department of Defense policy provides that no more than 6,500 IRR Soldiers may be involuntarily mobilized at any one time. Accordingly, consideration will be given to request an increase to the current limit of 6,500 when identified or anticipated requirements merit such a request.

8. Q: What is the possibility of eliminating the AGR Force and making an AC to RC tour mandatory (for promotion) to major and again to colonel? This would not include tours at USARC and St. Louis. Tour must be in a traditional RC unit.

A: The AGR program provides unique benefits and addresses specific requirements of the RC. These benefits and requirements are separate from the on-going AC/RC Tour Program, which provides an important vehicle for professional development. To date, neither the Army Reserve nor the Army National Guard has requested elimination of the Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) Program. Likewise, there has been no formal request to make service in an AC/RC assignment a prerequisite for promotion to any grade. Any such request would obviously require a thorough review of requirements to ensure readiness and to preclude potentially reducing promotion opportunity for officers who, due to no fault of their own, were unable to complete an AC/RC tour. The above notwithstanding, the Army emphasizes diverse experience in its assignment, selection and promotion processes. Assignment to an AC/RC position remains an important vehicle in both developing leaders and in building the Total Army Team.

9. Q: Some Soldiers have continued in a TDY status while on multi-year orders. Why are Soldiers on legitimate one-year orders being forced to PCS (without family)?

A: The Army's TCS Policy is currently under review and ASA (M&RA) will issue guidance soon. However, we must highlight that no Soldier is forced to PCS without his Family. RC Soldiers in this category are given the option of PCS or TCS; there are benefits associated with each of these options.

10. Q: By institutionalizing recurring mobilizations across an RC career, you institutionalize stress on civilian employment. How do you anticipate partnering with civilian employers to preserve both parts of the Civilian-Soldier's livelihood?

A: Army Initiative 4 identified adapting incentives for RC Soldiers, their Families, and Employers as essential task number three. One element of this task is to collaborate with employers in an effort to help minimize the impact of an absence by an RC Citizen-Soldier. This will, of course, require innovative approaches and partnering to realize our objectives. One such initiative is "Seamless Healthcare" and an initiative for cost sharing the civilian-employer sponsored healthcare based on the ratio of utilization in accordance with the ARFORGEN cycle. An example of how we are communicating with employers is the USAR Employer Outreach General Officer Steering Committee. The Committee will interact with the business community to ensure that Army Reserve Soldiers remain competitive in both their military and civilian careers. As part of that effort, the committee will be reaching out over the next year to Chambers of Commerce,

professional associations, and other business organizations to explain the ARFORGEN concept and the mission of operationalizing the RC.

Also, the initiative will require collaboration with the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to identify employer incentives. The ESGR is a DoD agency that promotes public and private understanding of the National Guard and Reserve in order to gain employer and community support. ESGR is comprised of a community-based volunteer network of more than 4,500 members that serve on 54 committees (each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands) that work to implement employer support programs within their local communities.

11. Q: Please describe any incentives, legislative attempts, etc. in order to encourage the employer sector to allow the "continuum of service" both in wartime and peacetime. What does the future hold and how can AUSA help?

A: In December 2008, RAND Arroyo Center will publish the findings of a study designed to identify ways to incentivize employers. The study is focusing on three separate areas: 1. What can the Army do to motivate individuals to join or stay in the ARNG and USAR? 2. What incentives can the Army provide that will motvate Family members to support their Soldiers' continued service in the ARNG and USAR given the demand for more time away from home for training and mobilization? 3. What incentives will motivate small (50 or less employees), medium (51 to 500 employees) and large (over 500 employees) businesses to hire, retain and promote RC soldiers?

Retention is a readiness issue. Incentivizing Families and employers is essential to permitting RC Soldiers adequate time to train and mobilize as part of an operational force. The near term objective is to determine which incentives might best serve the Army in achieving its readiness/manning goals. The long term objective is to determine the programming costs and legislative actions necessary to enable the incentives. There are two legislative proposals before the House and Senate which will provide both tax incentives and tax credits to employers of Reserve Component members. Other incentives are being considered which would reward employers for hiring and supporting members of the Reserve.

12. Q: Has the RC leadership considered lifting or modifying the Mandatory Retirement Date (MRD) policy? What about an age 55 retirement? What hurdles exist to adjust the retirement benefits to make retirements available at 20 years of service (since it is pro-rated)?

A: Title 10 US Code, Chapter 1223 ("Retired Pay for Non-Regular Service") sections 12731, -32, and -39 specifically set the conditions for age and compensation criteria and execution. This chapter has been in effect since 2

January 2006. The 110th Congress did not propose to modify the current language in the NDAA 08.

From the Department of Defense perspective, those who could champion a DoDwide solution to RC retirement and compensation legislation would be the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. The Military Departments could also influence this effort through their respective personnel agencies.<sup>2</sup>

13. Q: We have heard about the "supporting to supported" relationship, particularly regarding pre-mob and post-mob, with FORSCOM, First Army and the RC. What does it mean exactly?

A: This arrangement describes the support relationships between the operational Army, the institutional Army, and the industrial Army. The latter are in a supported relationship to the operational Army. This support relationship also applies between First Army and the Reserve Component (RC). Prior to mobilization, First Army is supporting RC conducting pre-mobilization training. Upon mobilization, First Army becomes the supported organization and the RC becomes the supporting organization. This relationship clarifies responsibilities and contributes to efficient and effective training.

14. Q: Assuming the current OPTEMPO for the next 5-10 years, what are the optimal sizes for the AC, USAR and ARNG?

A: The Army is increasing the size of all three components. By the end of FY10 we will increase the size of the active component (AC) from 482K Soldiers to 547K and increase the size of the ARNG from 347K to 358K. For the USAR, end-strength will grow by only 1K – from 205K to 206K – but is dramatically reorganizing to better structure itself to meet the 21st Century security requirements. Even with this growth, the size of our AC, without significant operational contributions by the RC, will be unable to meet sustained global demands. However, the Army initiative to transition the RC to an operational force will enable us to meet those demands. If we do not do this, we would have to significantly increase the size of the AC by an order of magnitude.

15. Q: GEN Campbell led with this theme [we are engaged in a persistent conflict that is generational in nature] as the context for the panel discussion. To what degree, in his estimate, does our elected leadership understand this? And does the great American public understand this? And will there be the political (and public) will to support a "decade or more" of protracted conflict?

A: We believe the elected leadership understands that we are in a long struggle against terrorism. There are different approaches among the elected leadership about how we respond to this threat, but by their words and actions we can clearly see they understand the generational nature of the fight. Similarly, the

American public understands we are in a protracted conflict. The enemy has demonstrated the continuing intent and desire to attack us. Therefore the Army remains prepared to defend against this determined, undeterred enemy.

16. Q: To relieve pressure on RC forces, what is the long term goal? Are RC forces trying to keep to a 1 in 5 ARFORGEN cycle (note that a 1 in 5 deployment equates to a ratio of 1:4)?

A: Until global demand lessens, combatant commander requirements will require a number of selected RC units to be remobilized sooner than the ARFORGEN 1:4 standard. The Secretary of Defense's 19 January 2007 memo, "Total Force Utilization," directed that RC units be deployed as cohesive units and established a one year limit to mobilizations. Accordingly, the Army is taking measures to stabilize units by reducing the number of Soldiers that are cross-leveled between units. Effective FY11, the ARNG intends to reset units into the 1:4 model.

17. Q: If, due to the nature of COIN operations, there is a higher demand for Civil Affairs, Combat Support and Combat Service Support units, is there any plan to move some of this structure back to the Regular Army?

A: The Army has a formal process to routinely reassess force structure called the Total Army Analysis (TAA). The Army has already rebalanced a number of high demand / low density skills between the AC and RC and may do more based upon TAA. The TAA process is used by HQDA to determine organizational authorizations. TAA develops the total requirements and then the authorizations defining the force structure the Army must build, raise, provision, sustain, maintain, train and resource to meet OSD / Army guidance, combatant commanders' requirements and force structure initiatives. In accordance with Army timelines, these units will undergo the TAA process.

18. Q: Stability and Counterinsurgency operations are key in the contemporary environment as are participation in PRTs and MiTTs. Are there aspects of these requirements where you see particular performance strengths and challenges for the Guard and Reserves?

A: There is no question that the Citizen-Soldier brings a multitude of civilian skill sets that have tremendous applicability to the COIN fight. The Army has demonstrated remarkable dexterity aligning units and individuals with these valued skills against requirements. The Army will continue to source PRTs and MiTTs with those who have these unique skills (e.g., nursing, law enforcement, construction, attorneys, and public service professionals). The ARNG continues to function as a key member of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in order to help establish a more secure reconstruction program beyond large cities. These teams are established in various provinces and reflect a shift in strategy to community-based civil projects.

19. Q: When forces draw down in Iraq, there is an assumption that budgets will be reduced. What, specifically, is the Army doing to mitigate these fiscal reductions with the need to transition to an Operational Reserve that will establish long-term policy?

A: One assumption is that eventually the supplemental funding stream will be reduced commensurate with the reduction of operations in theater. With respect to the Initiative 4, the Army seeks to program most associated costs into the base budget through the PPBES process and the POM. Doing so will avoid a budget decrease if war supplementals stop. Specifically, however, Initiative 4 has identified costs both for the FY 08 and 09 supplemental and the POM FY 10-15.

20. Q: Recently, \$300 million required for training and equipping Soldiers and units who will respond to CBRNE was cut from the FY08 Budget (or '08 Supplemental). Our Army is not prepared to respond effectively to a terrorist CBRNE attack on the homeland. What's the plan, and will it affect ARFORGEN plans?

A: The FY 08 National Defense Authorization Act is under consideration by the Congress right now. It would be inappropriate to speculate on the outcome of Congress' decisions regarding next years' funding. ARFORGEN is a flexible process that synchronizes resources to units in order to meet combatant commander requirements. AFORGEN is sufficiently adaptive to meet these requirements.

21. Q: How can you have an operational reserve when both the Army National Guard and Army Reserve remain critically short of captains?

A: Like the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard, the Active Army is also short captains. Consequently, many positions traditionally filled by captains are being filled by lieutenants, and these young officers continue to do a tremendous job. Efforts to reduce these shortages include increased accessions from all commissioning sources (Reserve Officer Training Corps, United States Military Academy, Officer Candidate School), intra-Service transfers through the Blue-to-Green Program, a diverse menu of retention incentives for our captains, increased promotion rates, and earlier promotion pin-on points. In the long term, these initiatives could also result in some officers transferring to the Reserve Component. The Army will continue to pursue policies and additional legislative authorities that help alleviate the shortage of captains. Much like ensuring our Reserve Components are fully trained and equipped, resolving personnel readiness is not a short-term endeavor. It is a complex issue that requires a deliberate and thorough approach, and is one to which we will remain committed.

22. Q: How can retired Soldiers and spouses support the message and the mission of the operational reserve component?

A: First, retired Soldiers and their spouses must know and understand the Army story (the CSA's four imperatives) and how this initiative is nested within the CSA's vision. Then, they must tell the story to diverse audiences (social groups, churches, civic groups). Only then will the Army begin to focus our existing support, educate those who have limited contact with our Nation's military, and gain the consensus needed to achieve this imperative.

23. Q: What plans are in place to secure the proposals listed by the panel in the event of a change in Administration?

A: The initiative is in response to the demand and stress placed on the Army today. For that reason, it is an issue of national security that transcends party, branch of government and special interest. It is a question that must be addressed regardless of administration in office. Congress has the constitutional responsibility to raise and support the Army and this initiative ultimately is accountable to that body.

24. Q: Any comment on the rumor that the Commission on the Guard and Reserve will recommend a merger of the Guard and Reserve?

A: Any questions regarding such a rumor should be directed to the Commission. There are fundamental differences in the roles and mission of the Guard and Reserve, and each component provides unique strengths and capabilities that ensure our Nation's citizens continued safety and security.

25. Q: The 39<sup>th</sup> BCT (CAR-ARNG) will conduct three months of pre-mob training on Title 32 status at home station, prior to reporting to the mob station. The SecDef agreed that Title 32 mobilization does not count against the 12 month mob policy, and that he would evaluate this training model for use with the RC BCTs. What are the thoughts of the DARNG and CG, First Army about the use of this model? Is this a viable model?

A: The 39th BCT has requested 90 days of pre-MOB training to mitigate the effects of late notice and shorten prep time IAW the ARFORGEN reset/training/validation cycle. The pre-MOB training model requested by the 39th BCT should not, by any means, be considered the standard for all mobilizing units. The overarching reason for this strategy is to ensure this BCT receives additional time and resources to accomplish the tasks of Reset/Train/ Validate in accordance with the ARFORGEN model.

The three months of pre-MOB training on Title 32 status at home station, prior to reporting to the MOB station was looked at as a viable "bridging strategy" in a resource and time constrained environment. This course of action will enable actions and set conditions necessary to meet post-mobilization training requirements and deployment timelines.

26. Q: Will the slides be posted on the web site? A: Yes

<sup>1</sup> The following additional information was provided by Office of the Surgeon General (OTSG) regarding TRICARE For Life:

TRICARE For Life (TFL) is TRICARE's Medicare-wraparound coverage available to all Medicare-eligible TRICARE beneficiaries, regardless of age, provided they have Medicare Parts A and B.

While Medicare is your primary insurance, TRICARE acts as your secondary payer minimizing your out-of-pocket expenses. TRICARE benefits include covering Medicare's coinsurance and deductible.

Key features of TRICARE For Life are summarized below, and more information can be found at:

http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/overview/Plans/ForLife?plan=TRICARE

\* Minimal out-of-pocket costs (aside from Medicare part B premium).

- \* TRICARE is the secondary payer for all services covered by both TRICARE and Medicare.
  - \* TRICARE is the primary payer for those services covered only by TRICARE.

\* There are no enrollment fees for TFL. But, you must purchase Medicare Part B and pay monthly premiums to be eligible for TFL.

\* Freedom to manage your own health care – no assigned primary care manager. You may visit any Medicare provider.

\* In most cases there are no claims to file. Your provider will file your claim with Medicare and after they complete their processing, they will forward it electronically to TRICARE.

\* Additional steps may be required in order to coordinate benefits if you have other health insurance in addition to TRICARE and Medicare.

\* You may continue to receive care at a military treatment facility (MTF) on a space-available basis.

\* TRICARE pays similarly to TRICARE Standard in those overseas locations where Medicare is not available.

# Eligibility

TFL is available to all Medicare-eligible TRICARE beneficiaries, regardless of age, including retired members of the National Guard and Reserve who are in receipt of retired pay, family members, widows and widowers and certain former spouses. Dependent parents and parents-in-law are not eligible for TFL.

Note: If you are under age 65, have Medicare Part B, and live in a TRICARE Prime service area, you have the option to enroll in TRICARE Prime. TRICARE waives your TRICARE Prime enrollment fee.

You should confirm that your Medicare status is current in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Your uniformed services identification card and your Medicare card, which must reflect enrollment in Medicare Part B, are evidence of your TFL eligibility.

# How TFL Works for You

To learn more about how TFL works for you, you'll need to enter your profile and select "TRICARE For Life" as your health plan.

Can I suspend my Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) coverage to use TFL?

Yes, you can apply to suspend your FEHBP coverage by calling the Office of Personnel Management's Retirement Information line at 1-888-767-6738 to obtain a suspension form.

# Social Security Retirement Benefits and TRICARE

Although the age for full Social Security retirement benefits has increased, the age for Medicare entitlement has not changed; it continues to be age 65.

# HEALTHCARE FOR MOBILIZED RC MEMBERS

When an RC Soldier receives an active duty order for 30+ days that is also in support of a contingency operation, the RC Soldier and their family members are eligible for the following TRICARE benefits, listed in chronological order, by each phase of mobilization:

a. Pre-mobilization TRICARE benefit. RC Soldiers obtain TRICARE coverage for themselves and eligible family members when the RC Soldier receives an active duty order for a contingency operation. The maximum length of coverage is 90 days prior to mobilization; however, coverage starts when the contingency order is published.

b. Mobilization with an active duty order for 30+ days. During mobilization an RC Soldier and eligible family members have the same TRICARE benefits as an Active Component Soldier and eligible family members.

c. Post-mobilization, Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP). RC Soldiers and eligible family members receive TRICARE coverage for 180 days after separating from active duty for a contingency order for 30+ days. TAMP provides 180 days of TRICARE Prime and/or Standard coverage for eligible RC Soldiers and their family members upon separation from active duty.

d. Line of Duty Care. Following release from active duty, RC Soldiers are entitled to military healthcare regardless of the length of their orders if an injury, illness, or disease was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty (LOD). The Military Medical Support Office (MMSO) provides pre-authorization and payment for the civilian medical and dental healthcare of these Soldiers. Additionally, MMSO coordinates civilian healthcare services for remotely located service members by collaborating with unit representatives regarding LOD cases.

e. TRICARE Reserve Select Program (TRS). Expanded eligibility and enhancement of the TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) Program authorizes TRICARE Standard coverage for all members of the Selected Reserve (SELRES) and their family members. All participating SELRES Soldiers will be required to pay a single monthly premium equal of 28 percent. The current monthly premium under the expanded TRS Program is \$81 for an individual and \$253 for family coverage. TRS is a standardized uniform healthcare benefit for all SELRES Soldiers regardless of duty status.

f. Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP). Once the transitional period ends, certain RC Soldiers and their Families can voluntarily purchase medical coverage under the Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP). The Department of Defense has contracted with Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc., to administer the CHCBP. The CHCBP provides healthcare benefits similar to TRICARE Standard for up to 18 months to RC Soldiers and their family members. RC Soldiers ordered to active duty for more than 30 consecutive days and their family members are eligible for the CHCBP upon redeployment or when no longer eligible for healthcare under the Military Healthcare System. CHCBP is not part of TRICARE Standard. To obtain this coverage, an RC Soldier must enroll in CHCBP within 60 days after separation from active duty or loss of eligibility for military healthcare. The premiums for this coverage are \$933 per quarter for individuals and \$1,996 per quarter for Families.

g. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA). The Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) is required by law to provide eligible veterans hospital care and outpatient care services that are defined as needed. This decision of need will be based on the judgment of the veteran's healthcare provider and in accordance with generally accepted standards of clinical practice. The VA provides a standard enhanced health benefits plan available to all enrolled veterans. This plan emphasizes preventive and primary care, and offers a full range of outpatient and inpatient services within VA healthcare system. A priority system ensures that veterans with service-connected disabilities and those below the low-income threshold are able to be enrolled in the VA's healthcare system.

<sup>2</sup> However, as recently as February 2007, the Reserve Officers Association (ROA) restated its commitment to the hope that Congress would eventually succeed in addressing and adjusting this circumstance, pointing out that the 107th, 108th and 109th Congresses variously proposed bills that were intended to or

attempted to adjust the qualification and criteria for RC retirement, to include a "15-year" variation (less strict than that which presently exists in statute – see section 12731a), and entertainment of a "age 55" solution, both of these with a reduced compensation formula. ROA also encourages an evaluation of the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA) (1 October 1996) to find ways to offer flexibility and options to the RC population at large.

Additionally, as an advocate for Soldiers of all components, the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) has lent its support to similar legislative efforts.