



Department of Defense INSTRUCTION

NUMBER 1304.25

October 31, 2013

Incorporating Change 1, Effective May 1, 2020

USD(P&R)

SUBJECT: Fulfilling the Military Service Obligation (MSO)

References: See Enclosure 1

1. **PURPOSE.** This instruction:

a. Reissues DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1304.25 (Reference (a)) in accordance with the authority in DoD Directive (DoDD) 5124.02 (Reference (b)) to establish policy, assign responsibilities, and update the requirements, conditions, and restrictions for fulfilling the statutory MSO.

b. Incorporates and cancels Assistant Secretary of Defense memorandum (Reference (c)).

2. **APPLICABILITY.** This instruction 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 the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (referred to in this instruction as the “DoD Components”).

3. **POLICY.** It is DoD policy that every person who enters military service by enlistment or appointment incurs an MSO of 8 years from that entry date, in accordance with section 651 of Title 10, United States Code (Reference (d)). Exceptions to this policy are:

a. In time of war or national emergency declared by Congress, enlistments in the National Guard and Reserve are continued until 6 months after the end of such war or emergency, unless sooner terminated by the Secretary concerned, in accordance with section 12103 of Reference (d).

b. When a person is appointed as a commissioned officer in a critically short health professional specialty specified by the Secretary concerned. In accordance with section 651 of Reference (d), the minimum period of obligated service for an officer under this exception is the

greater of 2 years or, in the case of an officer who accepts an accession bonus or executes a contract or agreement for the multiyear receipt of special pay for service in a Military Service, the period of obligated service specified in the contract or agreement.

c. When a Service member who is released from the Active Component with a remaining MSO directly affiliates with the Selected Reserve (SELRES) and participates in accordance with section 10147 of Reference (d). The Secretary concerned may grant a waiver such that the 8 years MSO originally incurred by such member is reduced to 6 years.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES. See Enclosure 2.

5. PROCEDURES. See Enclosure 3.

6. RELEASABILITY. **Cleared for public release.** This instruction is available on the Directives Division Website at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/>.

7. SUMMARY OF CHANGE 1. The change to this issuance updates references and organizational titles and removes expiration language in accordance with current Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense direction.

8. EFFECTIVE DATE. This instruction is effective October 31, 2013.


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ENCLOSURE 1

REFERENCES

- (a) DoD Instruction 1304.25, "Fulfilling the Military Service Obligation (MSO)," August 25, 1997 (hereby cancelled)
- (b) DoD Directive 5124.02, "Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))," June 23, 2008
- (c) Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs memorandum, "Extension of Army Authority to Reduce Military Service Obligation (MSO) in Exchange for Selected Reserve Duty" (hereby cancelled)
- (d) Title 10, United States Code
- (e) DoD Instruction 5025.01, "DoD Issuances Program," August 1, 2016, as amended
- (f) DoD Instruction 1200.15, "Assignment to and Transfer Between Reserve Categories and Discharge From Reserve Status," November 7, 2019
- (g) DoD Instruction 1215.13, "Reserve Component (RC) Member Participation Policy," May 5, 2015
- (h) DoD Instruction 1332.14, "Enlisted Administrative Separations," January 27, 2014, as amended
- (i) DoD Instruction 1322.22, "Service Academies," September 24, 2015
- (j) DoD Instruction 1235.12, "Accessing the Reserve Components (RC)," June 7, 2016, as amended
- (k) DoD Instruction 1300.04, "Inter-Service and Inter-Component Transfers of Service Members," July 25, 2017
- (l) DoD Instruction 1215.06, "Uniform Reserve, Training and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components," March 11, 2014, as amended
- (m) Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," current edition

ENCLOSURE 2

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS (USD(P&R)). The USD(P&R) develops and implements this instruction in accordance with the authority in Reference (b).

2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS (ASD(M&RA)). Under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(P&R), the ASD(M&RA) develops additional implementing guidance for this instruction when required in accordance with Reference (e).

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 professions shortages.

4. SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS AND THE COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD (USCG). The Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Commandant of the USCG:

a. Establish procedures for fulfilling the MSO.

b. Maintain adequate and current personnel records on members of the Reserve Components, including mailing address, physical condition, military qualifications, dependency status, civilian occupational skills, availability for service, and other information that is needed to determine strength levels of the Military Services, in accordance with section 10204 of Reference (d).

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

d. Develop procedures for implementing waivers of the 8-year MSO for individuals separating from a Regular Component and directly affiliating with the SELRES, and for those appointed as commissioned officers in critically short health professional specialties published by the ASD(HA). The minimum period of service for the critically short health professional will be the greater of:

(1) 2 years; or

(2) In the case of an officer who has accepted a bonus or executed a contract or agreement for the multiyear receipt of incentive pay for service in the armed forces, the period of obligated service specified in such contract or agreement.

ENCLOSURE 3

PROCEDURES

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, in accordance with section 651 of Reference (d).

2. DISCHARGE OR SEPARATION FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY RE-ENTRY. Service periods before and after discharges and separations, which are immediately followed by entry into an Active or Reserve Component's accession program, count as continuous time towards fulfilling the MSO.

3. DISCHARGE BEFORE COMPLETION OF MSO. When the Secretary concerned determines that a Service member has no potential for service as prescribed in accordance with section 12301 of Reference (d), the member may be discharged before fulfilling the MSO. Policies for such discharges are in DoDI 1200.15 (Reference (f)), DoDI 1215.13 (Reference (g)), and DoDI 1332.14 (Reference (h)).

4. DELAYED ENTRY. Service members in a delayed entry program (DEP) incur an MSO. The period served in such status counts towards fulfillment of the MSO.

a. DEP. Persons who enlist in the Ready Reserve in accordance with section 513 of Reference (d) 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 may be ordered to involuntary initial active duty training (IADT) and will complete the remainder of the MSO in a Reserve Component unless discharged, in accordance with Reference (h).

b. Delayed Entry Into Training (DET). Persons who enlist in the Ready Reserve in accordance with section 12103(d) of Reference (d) for service in a Reserve Component, and whose IADT is postponed. DET members who fail to report for IADT may be ordered to involuntary IADT and will complete the remainder of the MSO in a Reserve Component unless discharged, in accordance with Reference (h).

c. Discharge From DEP and DET. DEP and DET members who are discharged for any of the reasons specified in Reference (h) are not credited for service incurred in fulfillment of the MSO, and any future enlistment or appointment of such persons will be treated as an original entry into military service.

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 the Service member acquires. Such credit will not alter the terms of any subsequent enlistment for specific periods of Active Component or Reserve Component service.

b. Paragraph 4c of this enclosure applies if service described in that paragraph was performed only in a delayed entry status.

c. Procedures for underage enlistments are established in Reference (h).

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.

7. SERVICE ACADEMY APPOINTMENTS. A cadet or midshipman appointed in accordance with section 4341a, 6953, or 9341a of Reference (d) incurs 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 offered following graduation, the MSO is equivalent to the period for which the Service member is ordered to serve on active duty or in a Reserve Component, in accordance with sections 4348, 6959, or 9348 of Reference (d) and DoDIs 1332.23 and 1235.12 (References (i) and (j)).

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 section 3 of this enclosure.

9. INTER-SERVICE AND INTER-COMPONENT TRANSFERS. Transfer of Service members who have a remaining MSO between Military Services or components of a Military Service is accomplished in accordance with DoDI 1300.04 (Reference (k)). Obligated military service performed before and after an authorized transfer counts toward fulfillment of the MSO.

10. MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY. A Service member may be discharged from a Reserve Component of any of the Military Services and his or her MSO obligation if the Service member, in accordance with Reference (f), becomes a member of the clergy and satisfactorily establishes in writing all four of these conditions:

a. The ministry is his or her primary vocation.

- b. His or her religious faith group is recognized substantially for religious purposes.
- c. His or her standing in the faith group is recognized as that of a minister or leader.
- d. He or she is certified by an applicable official of the faith group to be a fully qualified member of the clergy in good standing.

GLOSSARY

PART I. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASD(HA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
ASD(M&RA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs
DEP	Delayed Entry Program
DET	delayed entry into training
DoDD	DoD directive
DoDI	DoD instruction
IADT	initial active duty training
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
MSO	military service obligation
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SELRES	Selected Reserve
USCG	U. S. Coast Guard
USD(P&R)	Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

PART II. DEFINITIONS

Unless otherwise noted, these terms and their definitions are for the purposes of this instruction.

active status. Defined in section 101 of Reference (d).

discharge. Complete severance from all military status gained by an enlistment, appointment, or induction.

enlisted member. Defined in section 101 of Reference (d).

enlistment. The voluntary initial entry of a person as an enlisted member into any of the Military Services.

initial active duty training. Defined in section 6 of DoDI 1215.06 (Reference (l)).

inactive status. Defined in section 10152 of Reference (d).

Military Departments. Defined in section 101 of Reference (d).

MSO. The total required years of service that each person who becomes a member of a Military Service must serve under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Military Department concerned.

officer. Defined in section 101 of Reference (d).

Ready Reserve. Defined in section 10142 of Reference (d).

Reserve Component. Defined in the DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Reference (m)).

SELRES. Defined in section 10143 of Reference (d).

separation. A general term that includes discharge, release from active duty, release from custody and control of the Military Services, transfer to the IRR, and similar changes in active or reserve status.

underage. A Service member who is below 17 years of age, or is age 17 but enlists without parental consent, is underage.