



## Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 169

### INDEFINITE REENLISTMENT POLICY

**In March 2001, the Commandant announced in his Stroke-of-the-Pen ALCOAST 095/01 the Indefinite Reenlistment Program.** It noted that all enlisted members with over 10 years of service are considered **Career Coast Guardsmen** and will re-enlist indefinitely. Members would be able to request voluntary separation at any time if they have met all service obligations.

**Change 34 to the Personnel Manual provided that all active duty members, E-4 and above, with at least 10 years of active duty, who desire to continue on active duty, are required to reenlist for an indefinite period upon completion of any obligated service that takes them beyond their 10-year anniversary date.** Enlisted members entering an indefinite reenlistment will have their expected active duty termination date set to reflect 30 years from their active duty base date. Members serving on indefinite reenlistments may request voluntary separation or retirement, provided they have met all service obligations incurred for advancement, permanent change of station orders, and advanced or specialized training or election of a career status bonus. Members must request separation no less than 6 months prior to the requested separation date.

**For anyone who has ever tried to write and communicate effectively a policy change, you know that can be a very daunting task.** What may seem very clear to those who develop policy, is all too often misinterpreted by those distant from the discussions and explanations during its development. Recent feedback from members, including our Career Intentions Survey, indicates some misunderstanding of the change and impact on the individual.

**This was a move to parallel the management of our enlisted workforce with our officer workforce.** My objective was to treat our dedicated enlisted members, who have already made a substantial career commitment, as mature individuals and give them considerably more flexibility over their lives and careers. This is in keeping with Future Force 21 objectives and a policy change the US Army pioneered very effectively. As reported to me by then Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel of the Army, LtGen Dave Ohle: "It's about time we stop treating our professional soldiers as conscripts. They are mature individuals quite capable of making appropriate choices as their careers progress and families grow. It is counterproductive to force our good people to choose between lengthy employment contracts in the service with the potential for significant flexibilities offered on the outside."

**Within the Coast Guard for at least two decades we heard:** "Why do officers' ID cards say 'indefinite' while as enlisted we have to sign periodic contracts? We're mature people, we don't have to operate on that basis anymore ... that's a throwback to the days of press gangs and contracting for a cruise. We're just as much 'members' of this Coast Guard as any officer--not merely 'contract labor,' and we can be trusted to have the same kind of relationship!"

**So the *original* impetus behind the indefinite reenlistment was to treat our enlisted members like the professionals they are -- and upon which the Coast Guard is critically dependent to perform its missions.** In essence, this is nothing more than an 'open-ended contract,' and should have great value to both the member (considerably more control over their career choices) and the Coast Guard (improves the "employment environment" and significantly cuts down on the administrative reenlistment paperwork burden!). **There is absolutely nothing requiring you to commit to a 20-year, 30-year or any length career for that matter!**

**Some members seem to think it all comes down to them not having 'control' in their career. Quite the contrary with this policy -- you have the *most* flexibility we can reasonably offer.** Some of the concern may be based upon completing at least a one-year obligation at your current assignment INCONUS (two OUTCONUS) before you can leave active duty. Same requirement for officers. This gives our assignment officers the time horizon to set plans in motion for your replacement within the assignment process cycle. This is not an unreasonable request, given that as a military service we are faced with moving people to fill vacated billets every time a member leaves the Service. The policy of just a six month advanced notification for career separation/retirement dates should provide more flexibility for the member and family than trying to anticipate a separation or retirement date years ahead at the time of reenlistment/extension. Situations do change with time and our people today indicate they desire more "control" over their careers.

**Many of the issues/concerns expressed by members are likely not indefinite reenlistment issues, but rather general assignment issues -- issues regardless of the reenlistment policy in place.** There has been considerable discussion of these issues in the past from both CGPC-epm in their SITREPS/Ramblings & some of my previous Flag Voices. More and continued discussion is necessary! Future Flag Voices and CGPC-epm SITREPs will address the issues surrounding assignment decisions -- decisions that attempt to balance member (and family), unit and service needs -- but not always "successfully" as viewed from one or more of the three perspectives. While members may desire very specific policies (for instance: "no one will be transferred before tour complete"), that's easy to say but actually impossible to do when you then find yourself with empty billets and no one "eligible" to be transferred. Unfortunately, can't run the railroad like that, no matter how much we desire to keep people tour complete. Believe it our not, the last thing we want to do is transfer anyone who isn't tour complete! More to follow.

**The CGPC-epm JAN 02 SITREP will address the mechanics of managing the gaps as new billets come on line. The FEB & MAR 02 SITREPs will address the issues mentioned in this Flag Voice.**

If you continue to have concerns or questions, I encourage you to discuss further with your CMCs, Command Senior Enlisted Advisors and/or Career Development Advisors.

Regards, FL Ames



[Flag Voice Contents](#)

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