The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and
decisionmaking through research and analysis.

This electronic document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service
of the RAND Corporation.

Skip all front matter: Jump to Page 1 ▼

Support RAND

Browse Reports & Bookstore
Make a charitable contribution

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org
Explore RAND National Defense Research Institute
View document details

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND electronic documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND electronic documents are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see RAND Permissions.
This product is part of the RAND Corporation documented briefing series. RAND documented briefings are based on research briefed to a client, sponsor, or targeted audience and provide additional information on a specific topic. Although documented briefings have been peer reviewed, they are not expected to be comprehensive and may present preliminary findings.
Compensation for Combat Deaths
Policy Considerations

Paul Heaton, James N. Dertouzos, James M. Anderson, John Mendeloff

Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited
The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND’s publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

RAND® is a registered trademark.

© Copyright 2012 RAND Corporation

Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes. Unauthorized posting of RAND documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND documents are protected under copyright law. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit the RAND permissions page (http://www.rand.org/publications/permissions.html).

Published 2012 by the RAND Corporation
1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050
4570 Fifth Avenue, Suite 600, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-2665
RAND URL: http://www.rand.org

To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact
Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;
Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org
Summary

This briefing summarizes a project performed by researchers at the RAND Institute for Civil Justice (ICJ) and the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI). The goal of the project was to identify emerging policy questions related to compensation for U.S. military combat deaths and suggest opportunities for further research.

The question of how to compensate combat fatalities remains an important one: In recent years, the number of U.S. combat casualties has exceeded the number of commercial airline fatalities and the number of line-of-duty police deaths, and fatality rates for many military occupations are appreciably above those of even the riskiest civilian occupations. Combat casualties tend to be younger and have fewer dependents than fatalities occurring in many other contexts, patterns that may have implications for the desired compensation structure.

Existing Department of Defense (DoD) programs provide combat risk compensation in a variety of forms. Some forms of compensation, such as bonuses or hazardous duty pay, are *ex ante* in nature and are provided to a wide range of service members, whereas other programs, such as DoD’s Death Gratuity, are provided *ex post* only to survivors of those who have been killed in combat. DoD also provides a mix of both cash and in-kind compensation to families of those who have died in combat.

In considering the best way to structure compensation, DoD must confront a range of policy questions related to when, how, and how much service members and their families should be compensated for risk of combat death and its realization. Existing and potential future compensation systems can be assessed against a variety of goals, including social, national security, and efficiency criteria. There are also a range of additional initiatives and federal programs designed to provide compensation for premature death in other settings, such as the 9/11 Victims’ Compensation Fund and the Federal Employees Compensation Act, and examining how compensation is handled in these programs may provide useful lessons for DoD.