



Soldier Preferences and Retention Effects of Changes in Army Reserve Training Requirements

An Exploration of Revealed and Stated Behavior

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The authors examine how changes in training requirements affect soldiers' interest in staying in the U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and how their civilian employment and family situations influence that decision. The authors use administrative data and a survey to investigate both the likely impacts of changing unit-level USAR training requirements on retention outcomes and the overall preferences of USAR soldiers with respect to training load.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do changes in training requirements affect a soldier's interest in staying in the USAR?
- How do soldiers' personal situations affect their availability and/or motivation to participate in the USAR as training demands change?



KEY FINDINGS

- Soldiers in higher pay grades and who had one or more children and higher education levels were less likely to separate from the USAR, as were enlisted personnel who were African American, Asian, or Pacific Islanders.
- Reserve soldiers planning to stay in the USAR beyond their current obligation prefer a slight increase in AT (but not up to four weeks) and the status quo 48 periods of IDT per year.
- Most soldiers reported preferring a weekend IDT schedule to shifting some training to weeknights and preferring one continuous period of AT rather than splitting it into multiple periods.
- An increase in AT of a week or more from the current two weeks would result in a statistically significant share of officers who were planning to stay under the old policy instead choosing to leave the USAR.
- Retention intentions would be decreased if the minimum IDT level per policy were decreased to fewer than 48 periods per year for both enlisted personnel and officers.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- The USAR should not expand AT beyond three weeks if retention is a priority.
- The USAR should not reduce IDT periods if AT is expanded to between two and three weeks in order to maintain retention intentions.
- The USAR should continue to follow a weekend IDT schedule and a single, continuous period of AT.
- The USAR should offer options with varying levels of training requirements that could help meet the preferences of a wider range of Troop Program Unit soldiers.