



**STRATEGY
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**THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE'S MILITARY TECHNICIAN PROGRAM:
IT CAN BE OPTIMIZED FOR SUCCESS**

BY

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**The U.S. Army Reserve's Military Technician Program:
It Can Be Optimized for Success**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Designed as a career program, Military Technicians (Miltechs) support Army Reserve units. Legislated by Congress, the Program has a Dual Status force with members who work Reserve-related issues during their day jobs as civil servants, while also serving as soldiers in Army Reserve units. Miltechs provide continuity in units and perform necessary tasks and missions. The Program has not changed to reflect the current and evolving missions of the Army Reserve, however. It also does not provide an environment that allows individual Miltechs to achieve positions of increasing responsibility in both categories. With current legislation forcing out almost one quarter of current Program members and with almost one hundred additional vacancies, the Program needs some work - soon - to survive and succeed. Unless changes are made, the Program will not meet its authorized strength and unit readiness will suffer. Given the Army Reserve's contributions today, that is unsatisfactory. Only by making crucial changes posited here can the Miltech Program remain viable as a career. By capitalizing on the best ideas available, the Army Reserve's Miltech Program can strategically change to benefit the Army, Army Reserve, and individual Miltechs as it becomes a full-time force that is optimized for success.

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PREFACE

The Military Technician Program is relatively unknown except to a minority of soldiers and civilians in the Army. Of those who have actually heard of the Program, most know little of it and understand less. An ancillary purpose of this paper is to further explain the Program's history and to serve as a primer for those who need - or want - to know more of this congressionally-mandated element of full-time support which is critical to the success of the U.S. Army Reserve.

Although masculine pronouns are used throughout the paper to make it easier to read, they can be mentally altered to include female pronouns. The Army Reserve Military Technician Program includes both genders.

THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE'S MILITARY TECHNICIAN PROGRAM: IT CAN BE OPTIMIZED FOR SUCCESS

The U. S. Army Reserve (USAR) Military Technician (Miltech) Program can be a tremendous asset for Reserve units. Because it is unique, it is not well understood. This career program centers on a concept called Dual Status, which means that its members hold both Civil Service and Selected Army Reserve positions in Reserve units. As legislated by Congress, the Program, "... improves force readiness and responds to congressional interest in economically maintaining a peacetime workforce with mobilization capability."¹ Congress recently showed an active and intense interest in the Miltech Program with the latest Authorization Act,² which called for the elimination of up to 24 percent of current Miltech Program participants.

Besides this drastic personnel reduction, additional considerations indicate that the Miltech Program is not popular as a career option. One is the last survey of Program participants in which 65 percent felt there were too few promotion and professional development opportunities.³ Another is depicted by a recent Miltech job vacancy announcement where 96 Miltech vacancies, one of the largest numbers in recent history, were being advertised for fill.⁴ Despite the reduction and these other considerations, the Miltech Program can have a viable and promising future. Making this a reality will require some significant and strategic changes, however. All changes proposed on subsequent pages, whether large or small, will benefit the Army Reserve, the Program itself, and individual Miltechs. These proposals will also enhance opportunities for qualified Miltechs who have the potential for continued service at ever-increasing ranks in both the Army Reserve and the Civil Service. By making the programmatic changes necessary to retain the interest and service of these and other high quality people, the Program will regain viability and potential. On the other hand, failing to make needed changes will ensure that the Program remains no more than a career stepping stone that some occupy en route to better rewards and/or satisfaction. If Congress and the USAR want to keep the program vibrant, now is the time to make these changes. Before addressing any proposals for change, however, it is important to understand how Miltechs fit into the Army Reserve and its full-time support structure.

THE ARMY RESERVE AND FULL-TIME SUPPORT

The Selected Reserve is comprised of 208,000 Reservists,⁵ most of whom are assigned to units in 14,000 locations throughout the continental United States, as well as in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Germany, and Korea.⁶ The Selected Reserve primarily includes Reservists, typically referred to as Drilling Reservists, in Troop Program Units (TPU). These Drilling Reservists are not full-time soldiers; many, in fact, are occupied full-time in various and diverse fields. Since the USAR is not a full-time job for them,

their units need people to maintain continuity between unit drills (which are normally on weekends) and Annual Training (AT) periods. The people who provide this continuity on a daily basis comprise the unit's Full-Time Unit Support (FTUS) team.

There are four categories of FTUS team members.⁷ They are spread throughout the locations mentioned earlier and total slightly more than 20,000.⁸ While each TPU will normally have personnel from at least two FTUS categories; other Reserve elements may have all four. The first category of FTUS involves Active Component (AC) soldiers. These active duty soldiers are assigned to a Reserve unit based on specific skills they have or requirements they meet. These soldiers are usually noncommissioned officers (NCO), but can also be senior company or field grade officers and they bring experience about how the Army operates to the unit. The second category includes soldiers in the Active Guard Reserve (AGR) program. These officers and NCOs are Reserve soldiers who serve a tour on active duty in the unit. Since most of them were previously Drilling Reservists in TPUs, they bring knowledge of the Army Reserve and its operating systems to the unit. The third category includes Department of the Army (DA) Civilians who normally provide professional or clerical expertise.⁹ The fourth category includes Miltechs.

Miltechs normally bring expertise to the unit as civilian employees with Civil Service General Schedule (GS) job series specialties. As members of the Army Reserve themselves, they also have expertise about Army Reserve systems commensurate with their rank and experience as well as expertise in whatever branch or military occupational specialty they have. Miltechs are considered to have Dual-Status because of their simultaneous membership in the Army Reserve and their full-time employment as Military Technicians. Of the four categories of FTUS personnel, Miltechs and civilians are more likely to remain in units longer than AC or AGR soldiers, who will typically be in the unit for the length of a standard military assignment. As currently established, the Miltech seems to have a more restrictive career path than any of the other three categories because the current Dual Status system does not seem to optimize the capabilities of those individual Miltechs with the potential to advance both in military rank and civilian job series.

The Miltech Program has been in place for a number of years, during which time the Army has changed substantially. Besides being deployed thirty times in the last ten years, which is far more than the ten times it deployed operationally between 1940 and 1990, the Army has become substantially smaller.¹⁰ The Army Reserve has also been affected by these changes; the OPTEMPO of Reserve units has increased significantly since the Cold War ended. Our Reservists are no longer training for a unit-wide mobilization to accomplish its missions behind the Iron Curtain. Instead, the National Command Authorities are mobilizing and deploying individual Reservists or portions of units on a regular basis to accomplish missions in the Army Reserve's corps competencies. In one command, the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC), more than 2,500 reservists have been mobilized and deployed under what has practically been a continuous Presidential Selected Reserve Call-up (PSRC) since 1994. These soldiers have deployed to Haiti, to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and

to Kosovo.¹¹ Despite these increased requirements for Reservists as well as the incredible changes to the military environment, the Miltech Program remains essentially in the Cold War-era in which it was designed to operate. Although some proposals are being staffed or tested, there have been no substantive changes in the Program to reflect the current and evolving missions of the Army Reserve and its units or the joint environment in which so many operations are conducted. The result is a stifling of the Miltech Program and those in it. Before considering any changes to the Miltech Program, however, the background and history of the Program should be understood. At that point, the need for change, which will better serve the Army and Army Reserve of the twenty-first century, will be even clearer.

MILTECH PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Although there have been exceptions, the Military Technician Program is based on the dual status concept. This means that the Miltech performs in his Civil Service position during the week in a Reserve unit and reports to an Army Reserve unit wearing a uniform and appropriate rank when the unit meets for drills or AT. The Civil Service positions will either be GS, which normally includes white-collar jobs, or Wage Grade positions.¹²

Miltechs range in Civil Service rank from GS 4 through GS 14. These positions cover a number of Civil Service career areas, including those of personnel and administration, logistics and supply, training, resource and information management, and maintenance.¹³ Most (88 percent) Miltechs are noncommissioned officers and range in rank from sergeant through sergeant major. Officer Miltechs comprise the remaining 12 percent and include almost all warrant officer ranks as well as officers from second lieutenant through brigadier general. Program participation cuts across both ethnic and gender lines; although there are mostly white males in the program, 15 percent of the positions are filled by ethnic minorities and more than 6 percent are filled by women.¹⁴

Miltechs attend various education courses based on their full-time jobs, as well as military schools that are appropriate to their military rank or position. A large challenge to both officer and noncommissioned officer Miltechs is to ensure they are current in both civilian and military professional education. Attending and completing all required courses may require them to miss work or drills. Now that Congress has put teeth into enforcing its intent regarding the Dual Status portion of the Miltech Program, it is clear that any Miltech who becomes ineligible for further military service will be separated from the Miltech Program.¹⁵

The Miltech Program has generally remained the same size, with relatively minor fluctuations, in membership over the last few years. The current authorization, unchanged over the last two fiscal years, is 6,474, with a floor of 5,395¹⁶ and an actual strength of 6,304. Of those on hand, 1,521 were non-dual status members. Although the goal for the last forty years has been to have a dual status force, exceptions have been granted over the years that allowed the hiring of civilians. In other cases, Miltechs retired as Reservists and retained their full-time position or they allowed their Army Reserve membership

to lapse and continued in their Miltech position. Units may have been complicit in these cases which did not meet the longstanding intent of Congress. Recent legislation¹⁷ has reoriented the program to comply with the congressional intent, which is to rapidly achieve a completely dual status Miltech force.

Miltechs are hired through the Civil Service system based on the requirements specified in the job announcement. Once selected for a position they are eligible for the normal benefits and programs afforded other Civil Service employees, including incentive awards, leave (annual, sick, military, and other types), health benefits, life insurance and the thrift savings plan. Miltechs may also receive locality pay based upon the cost of living in their area, but do not get housing or housing allowances. In some areas with a high cost of living, Miltech positions may go unfilled if the starting GS grade is not enough to draw qualified applicants. The statutes covering the Miltech Program include both Titles 5¹⁸ and 10¹⁹, U.S. Code. The latter covers Miltech-specific authorizations and issues, while the former addresses the civil service components of dual status employment.

Since Miltechs hold two positions, they are rated in each. The Civilian Evaluation System, used by the Civil Service, rates the Miltech on full-time performance using one of two evaluation forms depending on the position's grade. As a soldier, the Officer Evaluation Report or the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report is used, depending on the Miltech's military rank.

The Miltech Program does have the attention of the Chief, Army Reserve, who is the senior Army Reservist and Executive Proponent for the Program. An advocate of the Miltech Program as a career, he has addressed improving areas of the Miltech's life cycle, including procurement, training, utilization, sustainment, and retirement or separation.²⁰ More recently, he addressed the need for more Miltechs to meet congressional authorizations.²¹

Besides the Program's background, its history is also crucial to understanding inherent problems and issues.

HISTORY OF THE MILTECH PROGRAM

The Army Reserve had requirements for maintaining continuity between drill assemblies as least as far back as 1950, when a token force of civilian assistants was authorized to support the active duty advisors to Army Reserve units.²² These assistants provided valuable functions and performed duties in support of individual reserve units. The realization soon hit that the real need for assistants was in the units themselves.

The current Miltech program had its roots in 1955, when the Department of the Army authorized 476 spaces for civilian assistants to work in Reserve units. These assistants were to help unit commanders in dealing with administrative requirements between unit drill assemblies. Depending on the unit's size, one assistant was authorized to service between five and ten company-level units. Civilian assistants were hired under Civil Service regulations and there was no requirement for them to be members of the Army Reserve (or of the particular unit), but that was encouraged.²³

As the Nation's concern with communism grew, partially in response to our involvement in the Korean War as well as continuing Soviet retrenchment in Europe, a new view of the Army Reserve developed. That view had the USAR, which then mirrored the active Army in organization with combat, combat support, and combat service support units, decisively engaged as a force that could be mobilized and deployed in support of national objectives and policies. This new view also increased the authorizations of civilian assistants. To ensure that Reserve units could be ready for mobilization in the personnel, administrative, and maintenance areas, the newly published Army Regulation (AR) 140-315, Army Reserve USAR Civilian Personnel, authorized civilian assistants for each unit that had a minimum of 50 assigned soldiers. By the end of 1956, the civilian assistant program had increased in size to over 2,000 people assigned to reserve units throughout the country, with grades ranging from GS 5 to GS 7.²⁴

In 1960, the U.S. Civil Service approved a proposal that required newly hired civilian assistants to be Army Reservists. The intent of this decision was to better ensure combat readiness by having civilian assistants who would actually mobilize and deploy with the unit. Additionally, those civilian assistants who were not reservists could continue in their positions without being separated or downgraded. The decision was also made that non-reservists could still be hired to fill positions for which reservists could not be found.²⁵ This was the beginning of the dual status concept for Technicians, although it would not be affirmed as such until 1969.²⁶

The program underwent a facelift in 1963 as the civilian assistants were formally established as USAR Technicians. Although Miltechs perform in additional general staff positions, the four primary categories of Miltechs and their duties, still valid today, were also defined:

The Staff Administrative Assistant (SAA) is assigned to battalion and higher headquarters as the full-time assistant to the unit commander in exercising functions of command. He also coordinates day to day administration, training, supply, and maintenance within the command, exercising technical supervision over all other technicians in the command.

The Staff Training Assistant (STA) [now the Staff Operations and Training Specialist/SOTS] is assigned to selected battalions and higher commands and is responsible for performing functions relating to operations and training.

The Staff Administrative Specialist (SAS) [now the Staff Administrative Assistant/SAA] is assigned to battalion and higher headquarters and performs administrative, training, and supply duties under the direction of the SAA.

The Administrative-Supply Technician (AST) [which evolved in some cases into the Unit Administrator/UA] is assigned to smaller units to perform the various necessary administrative and supply functions which cannot be accomplished by assigned personnel during regularly scheduled drills.²⁷

By 1967, the highest pay grade possible in the Technician force was GS 12.²⁸ A short time later the USAR technician was defined as “an authorized full-time civilian employee ...[who] performs tasks which cannot be performed or completed by military members of the unit ... while in a training status. If a unit were . . . like an active Army unit, the members . . . could accomplish their work and there would be no requirement for technicians.”²⁹ The Department of the Army established a policy in September 1970 that membership in an Army Reserve unit was a condition of employment for Army Reserve Technicians. This meant that a Miltech could be separated from his full-time position if separated from the USAR.³⁰ It was at this point that the Miltech Program really began evolving into a career program.

In 1983, the Army tried to ensure that military membership was clearly required for technicians. This was not as easy as it seemed due to the number of agencies, including Congress, the Civil Service Commission, and the Office of Personnel Management, who were interested in specific aspects of dual status. The latest and most current version of AR 140-315, now titled Employment and Utilization of U.S. Army Reserve Technicians, addressed the issue but there was no enforcement mechanism.³¹ The result was a stratification of employment conditions based upon the date the technician was hired, with the expectation that attrition would eventually thin out the force of non-reservist technicians. This never really happened. Finally, Congress took an active role to help the Army get to a fully dual status Miltech force. In the 1998 it gave the Army Reserve until 2007 to develop and execute a plan to achieve it.³²

This flexibility was removed by the latest Act, when the seemingly sudden removal or retirement by 5 April 2000 of remaining non-Dual Status Miltechs was mandated.³³ This was a sea change in Miltech management. Although the long-term and final result will be full implementation of the congressionally mandated Dual Status Miltech force, this short-term, time-driven change is causing substantial turmoil in the program.

Serving and potential Dual Status Miltechs understand that the Army is finally implementing what Congress has encouraged for years. As the force becomes one that is more aligned with the intent of Congress; however, there are other changes that could make the program more efficient, effective, and attractive to those seeking a career. These changes are better seen through the prism of the current program. After that, the National Guard Technician Program and ongoing U.S. Army Reserve Command actions and initiatives will be examined before proposing additional recommendations to enhance the USAR Miltech Program.

DUAL STATUS: A MILTECH'S CAREER

A newly hired UA, which is a typical entry-level position for a Miltech, will normally be selected for a vacant position in a single digit GS grade. This Miltech will also join the TPU in an appropriate position at whichever officer or noncommissioned officer rank he holds. If the military position requires a specific branch, functional area or specialty, the soldier will be scheduled for the required training unless already

qualified. Before even making the selection, however, the hiring authority also determined that the applying Miltech was qualified for entering into both positions and that the skills required for both his full-time Miltech and reservist military duties were compatible.³⁴ Such compatibility has been required since 10 February 1996,³⁵ although those hired earlier are grandfathered as long as they are in the Program. An example of incompatibility is when an Army Reserve Private applies for an SSA position since there is no compatibility between what is expected of a Private, who has almost no experience in the Army, and the knowledge of the Army and Army Reserve that is expected of an SSA.

As time passes, high performing Miltechs will normally qualify for and receive normal Civil Service within-step, as well as longevity, pay increases and incentive awards. The GS grade of the Miltech job itself will rarely change, except under special conditions. This means that if the Miltech eventually wants to be promoted to a higher GS grade, he will need to find a job at that grade. At this point the Miltech may make a choice. The unit may be the only one in the Reserve Center or there may be a number of units there. In the latter case, especially if a higher level staff or organization is present, the UA may see some eventual promotion potential to higher GS grades. This assumes that there will eventually be vacancies for which the Miltech will be qualified by meeting or exceeding required education and performance standards.³⁶ If the unit is an isolated one and he does not want to or cannot move, that Miltech may make the choice to remain there in his current GS grade and forgo further advancement. Although staying in a job somewhat longer than a normal military tour may provide stability in the unit, there are also disadvantages if one becomes stale and/or accrues power exceeding that which is commensurate with the position. Other options are for the Miltech to leave the Program or to seek a higher position in another location.

Since the Miltech Program parallels Civil Service automation advances in the job announcement and hiring process, it is relatively easy to access, review, and apply for Miltech job announcements for both overseas and continental U.S. locations. To further ease this process, the USARC, which serves as the proponent for the Miltech Program, has also instituted an Open Register for UA positions. This allows any potential or promotion-desiring UA to submit his name on a standing list for the next higher grade. When a position opens, hiring authorities can access the register to identify the best-qualified applicant. If selected for a new position, however, it is currently up to the Miltech to pay for the move unless the hiring command has indicated that it will pay or the Miltech falls under the parameters of the USARC test program that covers moving expenses. This expense, if it falls to the individual Miltech, may prevent the best person being hired for open positions. Once the Miltech moves to a new full-time position and unit, the cycle starts again and he also joins his new TPU as a Reservist.

As time passes, Miltechs will also eventually qualify for military promotions. This will not be an issue as long as there are positions in the unit at the higher rank. As in most organizations, however, there are usually fewer positions in units as one advances in rank. When the Miltech Program started, the expectation was that the Miltech would meet his full-time and military obligations simultaneously in the same unit. Times have changed, but this is still required by Department of Defense (DOD) Directive.³⁷

Making it work may be a challenge if the Miltech, on the senior noncommissioned officer reservist side, is a one-to-a-unit sergeant major or command sergeant major. The same situation occurs for officers, especially for lieutenant colonels and colonels who are striving to keep their military careers moving by competing for unit command. The current USARC guidance is that Miltechs may serve as reservists outside the unit at which they are employed as long as their Reserve unit falls under the same Mobilization Entity or has the same "AA" Unit Identification Code (UIC) as their Miltech unit.³⁸ As an example: a Miltech in USARC cannot serve as a soldier in a USACAPOC unit and vice versa. While this guidance provides more flexibility than the Directive, it also might keep the Miltech reservist from serving in a unit for which he is otherwise qualified in the same Reserve Center. The USARC Guidance, while helpful, could result in Reserve soldier Miltechs serving in units substantially distant from their full-time place of employment in order to find a unit in which they can serve in an appropriate grade. This is less of a problem for Miltechs who wish to be staff NCOs or officers, since headquarters units typically have many staff positions for senior officers or NCOs. Those Miltechs who aspire to leadership or command billets, however, may find themselves unable to keep parallel civilian and military career tracks without an understanding chain of command or supervision.

Disconnects like this can lead to frustration. While the challenges of maintaining a Dual Status career are addressed in the Military Technician Career Guide, no solutions for the conflicts between Miltech and Reserve careers are offered.³⁹ Some Miltechs seemingly write off any hope of promotion as Miltechs and opt to stay where they are hired. As mentioned in the Miltech's Information Handbook, Miltechs ". . . have proven to be a very stable workforce, principally because they are not required to routinely and periodically make permanent-change-of-station (PCS) moves."⁴⁰ While an advantage in one way, this view can also be counterproductive, especially since the Army Reserve's goal is to have a Miltech career program where high-performing soldier-Miltechs succeed in parallel careers.⁴¹ While some Miltechs may be very satisfied and perform extremely well in one location for an extended period of time or even through retirement, it is unfortunate if they are doing so because they feel locked-in to a position or location without promotion opportunities. This may have been the case for those who voluntarily left the program recently; excluding deaths and retirement, more than two-thirds of those Miltechs who left the Program did so by resignation (175) or by joining the AGR Program (37).⁴² Since most of those who resigned are service-oriented people, many did so to obtain DOD or DA civilian positions where mobilization entity and compatibility are not issues. In these positions they can remain in the Civil Service system and join any Army Reserve unit for which they are or can become qualified.

Unless changes are made in the Miltech program, it will be difficult to retain highly qualified Miltechs who are unable or unwilling to continue trying to balance their Miltech and military careers. The departure of such people will be a loss to the Program. Since the National Guard also has a Technician Program, reviewing it may surface some changes applicable for the Army Reserve.

NATIONAL GUARD APPROACHES

The Army (ARNG) and Air National Guard (ANG) also have versions of the Miltech Program, referred to as the Technician Program. Both are substantially larger than the USAR program.⁴³ Although much is the same, including some statutory authority and retirement plans, for both programs, there are some differences between the USAR and Guard versions. One statutory similarity is that Guard Technicians are expected, as are USAR Miltechs, to have compatibility between their military and civilian positions.⁴⁴ This is partially accomplished by requiring Guard Technicians to wear uniforms every day to their technician job as well as to unit drills. The Guard position is that wearing the uniform helps maintain the military focus of the unit and also demonstrates compatibility by showing that supervisors are not outranked by subordinates in either full-time or military positions. Although some USAR units have tried to establish various policies on this, Army Reserve Miltechs currently have the choice of wearing either the appropriate duty uniform⁴⁵ or civilian clothes.⁴⁶ Both Guard and Reserve programs also expect technicians to meet basic military requirements; soldier/airman-technicians who fail to do so can be separated from the military component of their dual status position. Once that happens, they can also be separated from their Technician position.

The Mobilization Entity/UIC issue does not exist for Guardsmen Technicians. All technicians are members of the State's Guard. As with many AGR Guardsmen, their military position can be in any unit for which they are qualified; they are not required to be in the unit where they work full-time. Not doing so may be frustrating to their full-time supervisors on a drill weekend, but this seems pervasive throughout the Guard.⁴⁷

There are also some differences among the states in the Guard program. Among these are ARNG units typically placing AGR NCOs in units where a Reserve or another Guard unit would have a UA Miltech position. This is primarily because the pay level of a UA as a GS 5, step 1 at \$21,370⁴⁸ is considered low in many places. As a result, many locations have difficulty in getting a pool of qualified UA applicants to choose from. Even though placing an AGR staff sergeant is more expensive (more than \$30,000 with housing and subsistence allowances, assuming ten years of service),⁴⁹ doing so ensures that someone is on duty in that unit. This makes more sense than having a continually vacant Miltech position. States that do this will usually have more technicians at the headquarters or state level, where there is a larger applicant pool to better fill available positions and where living costs may be less onerous.⁵⁰

While the National Guard has some potential ideas in their Technician Program that could be adopted in the USAR, the Military Technician Branch at the USARC has also been working on ways to improve and enhance the Miltech Program.

USARC MILTECH PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Although some initiatives are already in place, the USARC is still reviewing or considering ways to improve or enhance the Miltech Program. As the proponent for the Miltech Program, the USARC has its hands full in working to improve the Program. Although currently understaffed, its Miltech Branch is still responsible to work crucial issues. Although reacting to the non-Dual Status separation provisions of the new law has delayed initiatives on improving the Miltech Program, such actions will be renewed soon.⁵¹

Already established are methods of disseminating information to Miltechs. Hub Magazine, prepared and disseminated by the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command (AR-PERSCOM), provides a quarterly update to all Miltechs and other FTUS personnel and covers mostly policy issues. Another quarterly is the Military Technician Program Newsletter, disseminated by the Military Technician Program Division at Fort McCoy, WI, which provides nuts and bolts information on Miltech issues and situations. There is also a website, managed by AR-PERSCOM, which provides regularly updated information to Miltechs.

Other career-critical initiatives being reviewed or considered by the USARC, besides the previously mentioned PCS Moving Program and the UA Open Register, include (with parenthetical comments):

- Developing an updated Miltech Career Development Program to realistically depict the opportunities for high performing Miltechs and show required and optional professional development training. (Unrealistic programs were previously distributed; this will better show how to balance Miltech and military careers.)

- Updating AR 140-315 to reflect program changes since its 1983 promulgation. (This should be helpful once revised; many changes have occurred in seventeen years.)

- Reviewing offered training for Miltechs to ensure it is appropriate, updated, and correct.

- Developing a current and updated recruiting brochure.⁵² (Unless the Program is publicized, there will not be a pool of qualified applicants.)

- Scheduling Full-Time Support Workshops to ensure commands in the field have the latest program updates and information.⁵³ (With some units having only one Miltech [the UA], it is critical to get updated information to Program members. Workshops like this could help substantially.)

- Updating the Information Handbook and Career Guide. (Both books are five years old and contain dated and inaccurate information.)

- Updating UA job descriptions. (Given all the evolving duties of the UA, together with automation-driven requirements, this is critical.)⁵⁴

- Coordinating with Guard Technician managers to share Program ideas. (Cross-fertilization usually makes sense and can really help.)

-Establishing bonuses for hiring UAs in high cost of living areas.⁵⁵ (Other approaches may include providing Miltech housing allowances or placing AGRs in hard to fill positions, like some Guard units do, to ensure that such critical positions are not vacant.)

USAR MILTECH PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The Miltech Program has tremendous potential to develop into a satisfying career program that will meet the personal goals of all members if even some of the USARC initiatives are enacted. Approving and implementing initiatives such as the PCS Moving Program will go a long way to improving the program by enabling the best Miltechs to apply and be considered for better positions, knowing they will not lose hard-earned money in a move.

There are other minor, but strategic, changes that should also be considered. The Open Register concept should be expanded to cover more Miltech positions. Currently working among UAs, it should give all Miltechs who aspire to service at higher grades the opportunity to apply for such positions. A standing register of qualified applicants who are ready to fill higher positions regardless of location will speed the hiring process and give the hiring authority the best possible applicant pool. Combined with a funded move, the best-qualified Miltechs could quickly be selected for and moved to that new position. A Mentor Program would also give interested junior-ranking Miltechs the capability to bounce ideas and potential career moves off a more experienced senior Miltech. While all Miltechs could be mentored eventually, the initial goal would be to identify mentors for those Miltechs who wish to be mentored. Given that Miltechs are mostly individually spread among some of the 14,000 locations of Army Reserve units, even telephonic or email mentoring would provide guidance and advice to those who seek it as they continue to work their way up the career ladder.

One of the most critical and strategic changes, however, would be to allow Miltechs to serve in the Selected Reserve, free from the restrictions of UIC or Mobilization Entity. Doing this would require minor DOD Directive and legislative changes, but allowing Miltechs to serve in any Selected Reserve unit would make a plethora of new opportunities available. Miltechs could serve in Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA, a part of the Selected Reserve) positions on the Army or Joint staff, in Joint Readiness Units, or in close-to-home Reserve units that have positions available for their rank. Given how jointness has become critical to our military success, it is a travesty that Miltechs are denied the opportunity to become Joint Service qualified. Whether such assignments would be given blanket approval or require a waiver process, the result would be more capable, versatile, and knowledgeable Miltechs.

All proposed changes will improve or enhance the Miltech Program, but there is an alternative view.

COUNTERPOINTS

If nothing is done to modify the Miltech Program, it will continue to sputter along. Quality people will keep using it as a parking space while looking for other opportunities that will pay them what they are worth or will otherwise give them the satisfaction they want and need. It will remain difficult to fill all the currently vacant Miltech positions. Those in the Program will discover what a challenge it is to advance in a nominally parallel but realistically restrictive Dual Status career. The lack of mentors and no accurate career development plans will frustrate those who want to make a contribution while building a career. Being selected for a Miltech promotion may mean paying for the move as well as trying to find an appropriate military position. And memories of the big reduction in 2000 will always be on the fringe to remind Miltechs what happened, and who suffered, when the program did not evolve as Congress desired.

On the other hand, even relatively small changes will help the Program. Whether or not all initiatives listed in previous sections are adopted and implemented, any that are will positively affect the quality of the Miltech force. Current restrictions for military assignments make Miltechs seem like second class citizens. Giving them the ability to pursue challenging military assignments in the Army Reserve will keep them in the Program and increase their qualifications. Providing high-performing Miltechs who aspire to "be all they can be" with the capability to advance onward and upward in their parallel career tracks will help put the right people in the right jobs while providing incentives and opportunity. All those who work for our Nation's defense should have the opportunity to reach the heights for which they are qualified. The proposed changes will help make that happen.

CONCLUSION

Our Army will continue to have a Miltech Program for the foreseeable future. It will continue because Congress sees the Program as an economic way of providing recognized and needed support to the USAR. By keeping the Miltech Program, Congress can budget for a smaller active military force.

As long as the Miltech Program exists, it should be viable. Implementing all, most, or even some of the proposed changes will make it a better program for the Army and affected Miltechs. Enacting these changes, some of which are strategic in nature, will help optimize the Miltech Program for success.

Word count = 5,884

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⁶Thomas J. Plewes, An Annual Report on the State of the United States Army Reserve, 1999, Annual Report presented to the 106th Congress, 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1999), 22.

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³⁵Plewes, "Future of the Army Reserve Military Technician (MT) Program"

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