

# USAR Top Five FAQs

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Army Reservists and their families can face some tough issues during a deployment. Questions about benefits, promotions and other issues can become a major distraction to Soldiers overseas. Army Reserve Affairs (ARA) is here on Camp Arifjan to help, as well as in Baghdad and Bagram, Afghanistan. In a special series of articles for the Desert Voice, ARA will answer Soldiers' most frequently asked questions.

**Q #1:** My employer continues to pay my full salary while I am on mobilized. Do I get a tax break on my civilian pay as well as my military pay?

**A #1:** No, good try though!

Employers who make up the difference of an employee's salary while the employee is mobilized or who pay the entire salary of an employee who is mobilized are not required to take out withholding to include taxes or FICA. This income should be reported to the employee at the end of the tax year on a 1099-MISC showing no withholding (unless the employee made previous arrangements with the employer). You should find out from your employer if they are withholding taxes for you, if not, this may result in an underpayment of taxes by you at the end of the tax year. If that is the case you should go to the IRS or a tax consultant immediately to avoid tax penalties for UNDERPAYMENT of taxes.

Just to explain your military basic pay and benefits. You are covered under the Combat Zone Tax Exclusion (CZTE). This is a monetary benefit for designated zones such as Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. All enlisted Soldiers and Warrant Officer's basic pay plus the Hostile Fire and Imminent Danger Pay (HF/IDF) are tax-exempt each month from federal and state tax; for commissioned officers only the first \$6,315.90 is covered. This exemption starts the day you arrive and the day you depart from the zone and remains in effect for the entire month, regardless of the number of days you spend at that location.

**Q #2:** My unit was mobilized in 2002 for Bosnia and then mobilized in February 2003 for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Why doesn't our Bosnia deployment time count towards our 24 months for REFRAID purposes?

**A #2:** Your tour in Bosnia does not count towards your 24 months mobilization time because you were ordered to duty under a Presidential Reserve Call-up which is a

different authority than what you are currently mobilized under.

On Dec. 18, 1995, President Clinton signed a Presidential Reserve Call-up which authorized the mobilization of Reservists for a period not to exceed 270 days to support peace operations in Bosnia.

On Sept. 14, 2001, in response to the World Trade Tower terrorist attacks, President Bush ordered the use of the Ready Reserves of the Armed Forces to fight the Global War on Terrorism by declaring a partial mobilization. Under this partial mobilization authority up to 1,000,000 Reservists from all services can be mobilized for a period not to exceed 24 months. This presidential authority has been used to mobilize Reservists to support Operation Noble Eagle (providing security at our nation's airports, seaports, chemical plants, etc), to support Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), and most recently to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. All three of these operations fall under the Global War on Terrorism and any time spent mobilized in support of any or all three of these operations counts towards your 24 months of mobilization time.

Starting around January 2003, some missions, such as Bosnia and the Multinational Force & Observers mission in the Sinai, have been executed using the current partial mobilization authority. Your mobilization orders will indicate if you were mobilized under this authority. If this is the case, this would count towards your 24 months mobilization time.

**Q #3:** How do we get our expired Power's of Attorney fixed?

**A #3:** This is a command issue. The Company Commander/1SG should arrange for your local Legal Assistance Office to complete an updated Power of Attorney.

**Q #4:** Can we take our entire leave when we get home, or are we limited to just 30 days and have to sell the rest?

**A #4:** If you are a mobilized Soldier you have three options for your leave:

1) You can sell your leave back to the Army. If you sell back your accrued leave you will only receive your base pay times the number of days you are selling back. All entitlements such as HFP and BAH are not included in the formula. Leave that you earned while you were in theater is not taxable.

2) You can use all of your leave. This is the case even if you are supposed to demobilize



before you can use up all of your leave. In an event such as this, your unit must submit a memorandum through channels to HRC-Alexandria requesting an extension on active duty to expend accrued leave. When approved, the demobilization station is authorized to extend your orders and to adjust your DD Form 214 to take into account this extension. Leave that you earned while you were in theater is not taxable.

3) You can do a combination of the two.

**Q #5:** The families of active component soldiers have the ability to get counseling and other forms of assistance at their installations. For Reserve Component Soldiers, what is in place, or is being put out into place, to take care of our families counseling needs, and who is going to pay for it?

**A #5:** A new toll free information and referral service has expanded Army Reserve Family Program capabilities for military personnel and dependents worldwide. Army One Source is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week with professional consultants who can answer questions about TRICARE, child care, relocation, finances, legal, elder care, education and everyday household issues. They may not always be able to provide all the answers themselves, but they can direct you to the people who can.

From the United States call (800) 464-8107. From outside the United States dial the appropriate access code to reach a U.S. number and then (800) 464-8107 -- all 11 digits must be dialed. Hearing-impaired callers should use (800) 364-9188, and Spanish speakers can dial (888) 732-9020. On the Net: [www.ArmyOneSource.com](http://www.ArmyOneSource.com); user ID: army; password: onesource.

Please feel free to contact Army Reserve Affairs with your questions, but always use your chain-of-command first.

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