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The **Guard and Reserve Support Network** is a Department of Defense partnership of programs supporting the needs of the National Guard and Reserve community. **GRSN** is comprised of:



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U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht



DEPLOYMENTS: A thing of the past? Heidi Boyd-Rice appointed ORP Director

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Caine Storino

If you think Reserve Component deployments are a thing of the past, think again. While mobilizations have reduced since the height of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, there are still more than 24,000 Guard and Reserve Service members currently mobilized.

With continuing instability and conflict occurring around the world, as well as projected decreases in military spending, America's reliance on the RC Force will continue to be emphasized in the coming years. This is why Heidi Boyd-Rice, the newly appointed director of the Office for Reintegration Programs, has made a renewed commitment to expanding the tools and resources available to the National Guard and Reserve community.

"The past 15 years has been exhaustive on our troops, and it has also taken a toll on our employers, spouses, children, and communities alike," said Boyd-Rice. "And that's one of the primary reasons why we're here and why our initiatives exist."

Since 9/11, more than 918,000 activations have been supported by the National Guard and Reserve -- many of these activations have been fulfilled by Service members who have deployed numerous times.

"When we talk about our national security, we're simultaneously talking about the readiness of our RC force in being able to deploy during times of crisis and emergency," she said. "If Guard and Reservists aren't prepared for deployment and don't get the help they need when they return and reintegrate back into their civilian lives, then we face the degradation of our RC force's ability to respond in the future when we need them the most."

"Deployments are tough on everyone," she added. "It can be tough on the family, on the employer, and on the community."

For Boyd-Rice, being in a state of readiness isn't so much a philosophical view as much as it is a practical approach. It means building a supportive relationship with employers, addressing combat-related health issues before or as soon as they are discovered, being financially stable and secure, and maintaining strong family relationships during repeated deployments.

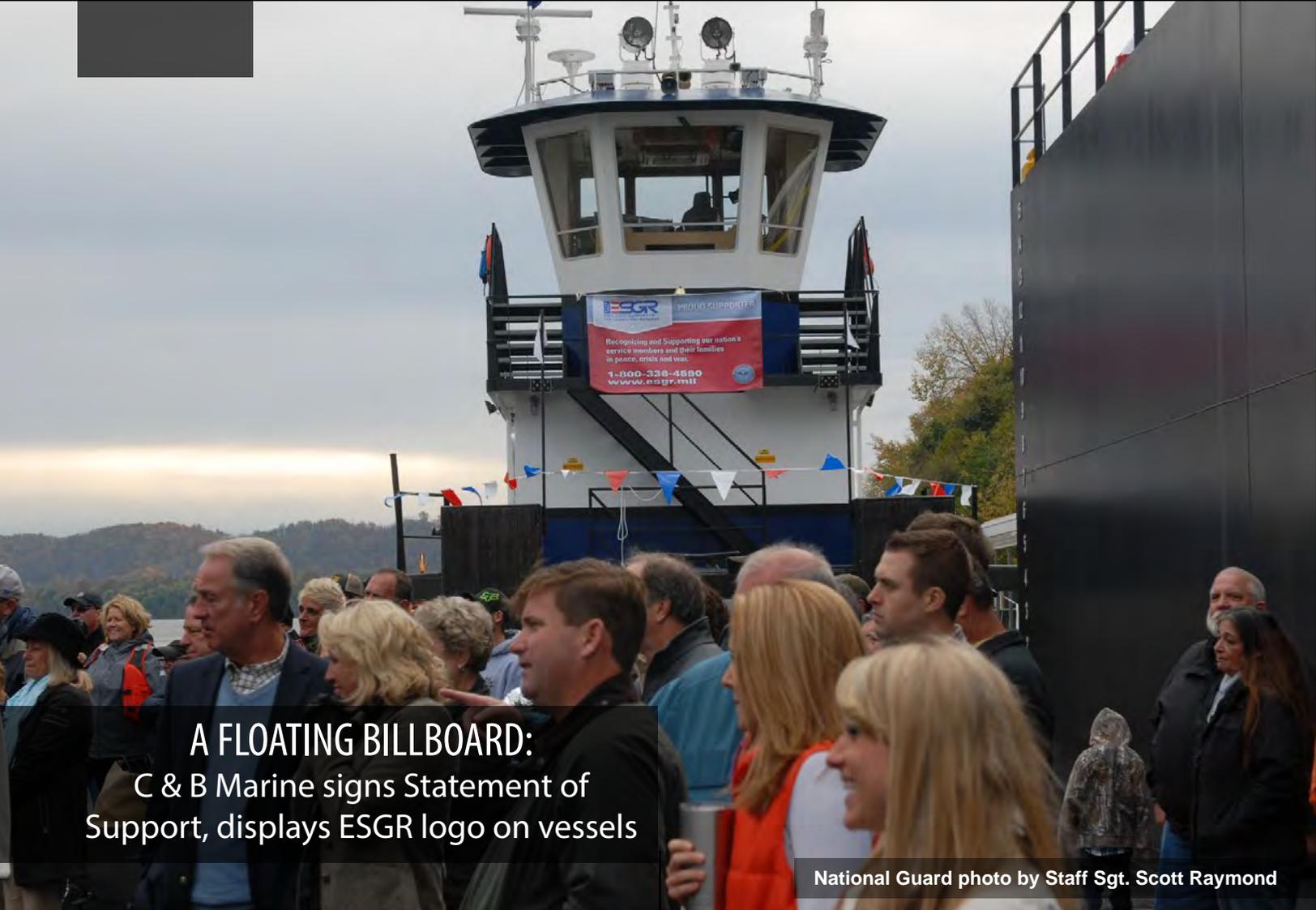
"We do this in a lot of ways," she said. "We connect them with resources, bring organizations together to explain benefits and entitlements, and we directly help thousands of Service members and their families build resumes, connect with employers, and find jobs."

Since 2008, ORP's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program and Hero2Hired have served more than 1.5 million National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families across the country.

"On top of our events, we have 56 Employment Coordinators, at least one in each state, that have directly assisted more than 25,000 Guardsmen and Reservists in finding employment," she said.

"Our greatest asset is our people," said Boyd-Rice. "They are not an expense, but rather, they are an investment in the security and well-being of our Nation."

Boyd-Rice has worked in a variety of roles within the Federal Government for more than 20 years, including serving as principle advisor to the Director of Defense Human Resources Activity and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. She provided policy and program support for a number of DoD-wide policies, including countering trafficking in persons, Social Security number reduction, identity management, identification card issuance, and benefits and entitlements to military members and their families. 



A FLOATING BILLBOARD: C & B Marine signs Statement of Support, displays ESGR logo on vessels

National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond

At the christening of C&B Marine's new towboat, The Atlantis, held Oct. 31 in Hebron, on the Ohio River, the company's owners signed an Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Statement of Support.

Flying from the new towboat's pilothouse was an ESGR banner, soon to be replaced by a permanent ESGR sign on its side.

"I like to think of it as ESGR's first 'floating billboard,'" says Kentucky state ESGR Chair Allen Youngman, a retired Army major general. "But it won't be the only one. C&B Marine's owners have indicated they want to put the ESGR logo on all of the firm's boats – 18 in all."

C&B operates along the entire 986 miles of the Ohio River from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Cairo, Illinois. It employs about 175 workers, and operates various barges, multiple deck flats for loading and unloading, barge cranes, and other construction equipment. The company also operates four fleeting areas and a heavy lifting dock in the Ports of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

Youngman says it all became possible because of one of his ESGR volunteer's connections to the inland waterways, his understanding of the potential of good exposure for ESGR, and his relationship with C&B Marine's owners, who want to hire more employees of good character and abilities.

"That person," explains Youngman, "is Kempton 'Chaps'

Baldrige, our Area 1 chair, who serves as chaplain for the Ohio River Region for The Seamen's Church Institute. He recognized the potential and knew how to begin the staff coordination, which eventually involved fulltime staff, the chair, the area chair in which the christening took place, and public affairs."

Best of all, according to Youngman, the result of this teamwork is going to be good careers for our Guard and Reserve personnel.

"The owners have indicated to us that our Guard and Reserve members provide a pool of prime potential employees who are drug-free, trained and mature," Youngman says. "When you get a Guardsman or Reservist, you get a different kind of employee – one who knows how to get up in the morning for work, knows how to listen to directions, know how to work as a team, and knows how to get the job done."

At the ceremony, Youngman presented C&B Marine with a Department of Defense Seven Seals award for its outstanding support. Youngman was one of the featured speakers at the christening of The Atlantis, as well as a floating dry dock and a crew boat. C&B Marine also had the ESGR name and its mission permanently painted on the inside of its floating dry dock.





SECDEF FREEDOM AWARD: Nomination season comes to an end

With the three-month nomination season for the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award now in the rear-view mirror, ESGR officials now switch from receiving mode to processing mode. With roughly 2,400 nominations received, the focus now turns to identifying the best of the best, a task that will culminate in late May, when this year's recipients will finally be named.

The nominations from Reserve Component troops and their families came in from every state, territory and the District of Columbia, and the nominators serve in every branch of the Reserve Component. The employers nominated ranged from large to small, public and private.

"These nominations represent sound cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their employers. Thousands of employers across this great nation have gone above and beyond what is required to provide exemplary support to our military men and women as well as their families," said Navy Capt. Steve Knight, ESGR Director of National Operations and Plans. "Our job now is to identify the cream of the crop, those that have truly earned the prestigious Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award."

With all the nominations in hand, the state ESGR committees will now review them for completeness, and forward their state's three best packages to ESGR headquarters in Washington, D.C. Those semifinalists, up

to 162 of them, will be named by early-March.

Once those packets arrive in Washington, the headquarters staff will narrow the nominees down to 30 finalists, who will be named in mid-March.

From there, a panel of military and civilian senior leaders from across the Defense Department will meet at the Pentagon to review the packets for each of the 30 finalists, and will recommend up to 15 employers for the award. Upon the Secretary of Defense's approval, the award recipients will be named in late May, and will be recognized at a Pentagon ceremony August 26.

Those employers will join the 220 previous recipients of the award, which is the U.S. government's highest recognition for their outstanding support of Guard and Reserve employees.

"It is a painstaking process," said Travis Bartholomew, Director of Strategic Communication and Public Affairs, Family and Employer Programs and Policy. "But we owe it to all the nominators and their employers to be as thorough as possible as we narrow the field down to those organizations that truly went above and beyond in support of their Reserve Component employees. Having this many outstanding employers to choose from makes the selection process a real challenge. But there are inspiring stories in each and every one of these nomination packets, and we look forward to sharing the best of them with everyone." 



CHANGING THE LAW:

Changes to the Public Law governing YRRP gives freedom to Services, Commanders

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Caine Storino

After repeated requests by the Reserve Components and program managers for greater flexibility and sustainability, the Office for Reintegration Programs is proud to announce a number of enhancements to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016 that governs the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.

Both the House of Representatives and Senate included the proposed amendments in their draft NDAA language, and minor differences were worked out via recession of the Senate version in the final bill. Following are the significant amendments impacting YRRP:

- Strikes the phrase “combat veteran” from the existing language, allowing the department flexibility in applying YRRP to a variety of mission types (e.g. theater security operations, humanitarian missions, etc.).

- Defines “eligible individual” as “a member of a Reserve Component, a member of their family, or a designated representative who the Secretary of Defense determines to be eligible for YRRP.” This is in keeping with current operations and codifies the Department’s ability to apply YRRP to meet commanders’ evolving needs.

- Authorizes ORP to issue grants in support of “data collection, trend analysis, and

curriculum development and to prepare reports in support of [YRRP activities].” The addition of this capability greatly enhances the program’s ability to measure successes and challenges and develop tools for the RCs.

- Amends the number of YRRP phases from four (Pre/During/Demobilization/Post) to three (Before/During/After) to simplify and streamline service delivery. The amendment also reduces the number of required events from six to four and allows for flexible scheduling of the events based on lessons learned since the program’s inception and the needs of commanders.

These changes are currently being updated in the YRRP Department of Defense Instruction drafted last year by a working group comprised of RC YRRP Liaison Officers and program managers. The draft was based on the proposed amendments and will now be coordinated again to ensure all the proper changes are captured and the needs of the RCs are addressed.

Once the draft is finalized, the DoDI will go forward for approval, which can be a lengthy process. In the meantime, ORP will distribute updated versions of the Public Law to the RC YRRP liaison officers and program managers for their use and continue working with them to address any needs they have.





Strong Military Families: How accreditation fits in



SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY READINESS



After more than 918,000 deployments over the last 15 years, Service members and families have and continue to endure an unpredictable and demanding operational tempo, dangerous combat zones with exposure to traumatic events and injuries, as well as short time periods between deployments. For some military families, deployments have impacted Service members' relationships with their children and families, causing a variety of reintegration difficulties.

These challenges, including many others not listed, are well known by military and family readiness programs supporting National Guard and Reserve Service members and their loved ones.

"Family readiness programs are the backbone of support to our military community," said Stacey Barnes, director of Service Member and Family Readiness. "They provide quality of life services to ensure our Guard and Reserve families receive needed care and resources during every stage of their military journey."

"Accreditation reflects a national standard of excellence or 'gold standard' while honoring the design and administration of unique military programs," said Barnes. "The commitment to excellence the Guard and Reserve has made to ensure military families, regardless of Service affiliation, receive the best service possible speaks volumes of their commitment to military families."

The accreditation standards were developed by a third

party national accrediting agency in coordination with the Department of Defense and military Services. Together they review family readiness sites to measure and validate the effectiveness of family readiness programs.

The accreditation process covers a variety of service areas, including administrative practices, literature reviews, and consultations with a diverse group of qualified civilian and military professionals. Site visits are conducted to confirm implementation of standards and compare findings against standardized criteria developed through evidence-based practices.

The Guard and Reserve military and family readiness programs participating in national accreditation receive greater coverage across communities, states, and regions beyond local installations. These nationally accredited programs now span throughout Kansas, Texas, and Indiana.

To date, 23 National Guard and Army Reserve programs are accredited, while 15 are awaiting results, and 21 are in pursuit of accreditation.

"Each of these programs that complete accreditation demonstrate their credibility, integrity, and achievement," said Barnes. "Achieving national accreditation is not an easy task and requires a lot of hard work by leadership and service providers; they are demonstrating their commitment in supporting strong military families." 