

Choosing to Deploy



Gone are the days of scrounging to fill deployment billets; today's all-volunteer military enjoys an abundance of willing service members.

By COL R. Brian Williams

As we enter our 10th year of war, the strains on our forces are showing. Our families are tired, our Soldiers are tired, and the friends of those in uniform are tired.

Gone are the days when men and boys were drafted into the service and forced to fight wars. In fact, we have asked our service members to do the impossible time and time again — and they have answered with resounding and continued success at every turn.

From the invasion of two countries, establishing governance of both, sustaining friends to accomplishing their given tasks both in the homeland and around the globe, our military has neither shirked its duty nor failed its mission.

In fact, our *all-volunteer* military has grown stronger as it has faced these challenges. We as a nation have answered the call and have done so valiantly.

Much to the chagrin of those who wish us harm, this nation has continued to keep its Army strong. This strength is through the individual Soldiers who volunteer for service and continue to serve after their initial tour is complete.

Not only have we seen the recruiting goals met time and time again, but we also are seeing a

reluctance of our Soldiers to leave this Army, and potential recruits are actually being turned away for lack of openings.

I believe that this is due to the Army offering so much to our young people and their families. An honorable profession that has superb benefits and tradition, the Army is what the people of the United States can count on in times of crisis.

The Active duty Soldiers, National Guardsmen and Reservists all are reenlisting at unimaginable rates. This may be counterintuitive in a time of war, but it is happening.

All of those who choose to serve do so with a clear understanding that they will be called upon to be sent into harms way, be it the horn of Africa, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Iraq or anywhere else they may be needed around the globe.

I have spoken with many Soldiers who understand the risks, and while they do not enjoy being separated from loved ones, truly enjoy the missions they are given while deployed. Even with the dangers, they choose to be involved in something larger than themselves.

I know several Soldiers who were put on waiting lists to deploy, simply because the Army already had

enough for its missions. Perhaps that is the advantage of an all-volunteer military.

I am consistently amazed at the dedication of those junior and mid-grade Soldiers and Officers who continue to deploy again and again, leaving their duty station or civilian jobs and their families behind, often at their own peril. Even those who return to broken homes and a job that is no longer there, these Soldiers continue to serve.

In talking with these magnificent Soldiers, I am humbled by their dedication and drive to accomplish the hard tasks given them. Combat is not easy, and the outcome of a firefight is not an assured thing; yet they continue to stay to do it again.

They guard our freedoms and keep us safe at night. It is to them I am most thankful as I look into the eyes of my family. ●



COL R. Brian Williams in Afghanistan.

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