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INSCOM enlisted Soldiers soon to find out assignments via e-mail

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WASHINGTON (Army News Service) - The Human Resources Command is using the Internet to maintain up-to-date information on enlisted Soldiers to help them choose assignments and manage their careers.

This month, HRC will begin notifying Soldiers of their next duty assignment within 90 days of their departure, by e-mailing the information to their Army Knowledge Online e-mail addresses. Other Web based initiatives include:

-- Sending e-mails that acknowledge receipt when Soldiers update their assignment preferences on Assignment Satisfaction Key, known as ASK the Web assignment preference page.

-- E-mail reminders will also be sent out to get Soldiers to update their contact information (home address and telephone number) 90 days after arriving at their new duty station. Then Soldiers will be reminded to update their assignment preferences on ASK after being stationed stateside for 24 months, and 18 months for those overseas.

"This is good thing. It's the next natural step for the Army to take in making it easier for the Soldier to manage his or her career," said Ray Domaskin, chief of INSCOM's military personnel branch. "This move will encourage our Soldiers to build a relationship with their assignments manager and that's something they need to do."

"The Army is going through a cultural change. We are giving privates career information before their chain of command finds out," said Brig. Gen. Howard Bromberg, the director of Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, HRC. "We will continue to change our policies as necessary to support the global war on terror and a joint and expeditionary Army."

Commanders will still find out about Soldier assignments through traditional means, but the HRC-GRAM, formerly known as the PERSGRAM, that is sent to Soldiers through the mail will be phased out. Soldiers will be able to find out about assignments through e-mail notification or by calling an Interactive Voice Response System at 1-800-FYI-EPMD.

ASK was introduced to Soldiers two years ago. However, this will be the first time Soldiers will have access to view key personnel information that is used by assignment managers when considering a Soldier for assignment, officials said.

"HRC is in the process of giving enlisted Soldiers access to their enlisted record briefs through the internet. Officers already have that capability. Now INSCOM Soldiers can update their preferences from

anywhere in the world. That's a huge advantage when we consider how widespread the command is," Domaskin said.

"It is important that Soldiers look at their personnel information to ensure it is correct. If it needs to be updated they need to contact their local personnel office," Bromberg said.

The more accurate information career managers have on a Soldier, the higher the success rate will be in finding an assignment that's right for the Soldier and the Army, Bromberg said. However, Bromberg added that in assigning Soldiers, the focus is still combat readiness, Bromberg added.

Where Soldiers are assigned is only a piece of the Army's stabilization puzzle, Bromberg said. The other parts include the Army's new Manning System, Force Stabilization which consists of unit focused stabilization and home-basing. Home-basing will require initial-term officers and enlisted Soldiers to stay at their first duty station for an extended tour of up to six or seven years.

"These initiatives are about unit over self," Bromberg said. "We're still taking care of Soldiers and getting them the training and care they need. But we're focused on getting units stabilized so they can do the mission at hand."

An example of the needs of the Army coming before assignment preference is: a Soldier serving in Korea who was told that he could go to Fort Hood, Texas, when his tour is over, as part of the program HAAP (home base/advance assignment program). But if during the Soldier's tour, overriding Army mission requirements determine that the Soldier is needed elsewhere their HAAP can be renegotiated. Enlisted personnel assignment managers work with the Soldier, but based on the requirements of the Army, may assign the Soldier to a new location.

"We're not getting rid of the program, but people think that if we give them an advance assignment, they are guaranteed that assignment," Bromberg said. "What we're saying is that we will try to meet requirements, but we may change, based on the needs of the Army."

Every single Soldier is needed somewhere in the Army, whether it's as an instructor, drill sergeant, recruiter or in a rifle platoon in a deploying unit, Bromberg said. Every skill is important, he added.

In the future, HRC also plans to expand its Web initiatives and get away from using Department of the Army form 4187, Personnel Action Request to streamline that process, also.

The vision is to have a Soldier volunteer for an assignment electronically. If requests can go up and back down all electronically, the process can be cut from 90 days to 14 days, Bromberg said. The technology is there, he added, and it can be done.

"It's a great initiative. It gets assignment information in the hands of the Soldier sooner, gives them greater control over their career and eliminates many of the paperwork hassles they experienced in the past," Domaskin added. "What can I say, except – it's a cool idea!"