



BAR TO REENLISTMENT



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WHAT IS A LOCAL BAR TO REENLISTMENT?

A bar to reenlistment is the administrative tool commanders use to deny reenlistment to Soldiers they believe to be substandard. Army Regulation (AR) 601-280 sets forth policies and procedures for the Army's retention and reenlistment program. The regulation provides that only Soldiers of "high moral character, personal competence, and demonstrated adaptability" to the requirements of military service may reenlist. Accordingly, the regulation authorizes bars for Soldiers whose immediate separation is not warranted, but whose reenlistment is not in the best interest of the Army. The focus is on service beyond Expiration Term of Service (ETS), not on forcing the Soldier out prior to ETS. Honorable service (the absence of misconduct) does not prevent a bar to reenlistment.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR IMPOSING A LOCAL BAR TO REENLISTMENT?

There are three criteria justifying initiation of a Bar to Reenlistment. In accordance with AR 601-280, bars are appropriate for Soldiers who are: 1) untrainable; 2) unsuitable; or 3) unable to enact a family care plan.

"Untrainable" simply means the Soldier has, despite repeated attempts, failed to meet minimum professional standards. Inability to perform basic tasks associated with their MOS, repeated failure of the Army Physical Fitness Test, or repeated failure to qualify with an assigned weapon are all examples of untrainability.

"Unsuitability" differs in that the focus is more on attitude and motivation. The suitability focuses on whether the Soldier presents proper military bearing and whether the Soldier refuses, or is otherwise unable, to adapt to the military lifestyle. Questionable off-duty conduct not amounting to misconduct may justify a bar on this ground.

Finally, single Soldiers with dependent family members, or dual military couples with dependents, either of whom are unable to craft an acceptable family care plan, will be subject to a bar.

WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES FOR INITIATING A BAR TO REENLISTMENT?

Any commander in a Soldier's chain of command may initiate a local bar. Normally, the Soldier's company-level commander initiates the action because that commander is most likely to have direct contact with the Soldier and be most aware of the Soldier's successes and shortcomings. A bar is initiated using DA Form 4126-R. Once the bar is initiated, the commander will present it to the Soldier. The Soldier then has 7 days to submit a rebuttal statement. If the commander determines the bar is still warranted, it will be forwarded up the chain of command for approval or disapproval.

For Soldiers with less than 10 years of active Federal service, the first commander in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (usually the battalion-level commander) will approve, or disapprove, the bar. For Soldiers with 10 or more years of active Federal service, the approval authority is the first General Officer in the Soldier's chain of command or the commander with authority to convene a general court-martial over the Soldier. Any of these higher-level commanders may disapprove the proposed bar.

An approved bar is placed in the Soldier's local personnel file. The commander must review the approved bar at the end of 3 months, if not before, and decide whether the bar should remain in place. Usually, the company-level commander will review the bar and make a recommendation to the commander who approved it. Once approved, only the approving commander or a higher commander may remove the bar. If the bar remains, the bar will again be reviewed at the end of another 3 months. If at that time the bar is not lifted, the command must initiate involuntary separation proceedings.



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CAN I APPEAL A DECISION TO APPROVE A BAR TO REENLISTMENT AGAINST ME?

Yes. Soldiers may appeal approved bars. Separation proceedings will be halted pending final action on the appeal. For Soldiers with less than 10 years active Federal service, the appeal authority is the first General Officer in the Soldier's chain of command or the commander exercising general court-martial jurisdiction over the Soldier. For Soldiers with 10 or more years of active Federal service, the appeal authority is the Commanding General, Personnel Command (PERSCOM). Appeals should rebut the allegation(s) of untrainability, unsuitability, or absence of a family care plan.

The appeal should focus on presenting the picture of a Soldier who is motivated, hard working, and otherwise committed to being a professional Soldier. It is critical to show that the Soldier wants to stay in the Army and that it is in the best interests of the Army to have the Soldier stay. Professionalism and commitment to excellence are the standard. The Soldier's appeal should focus on what the Soldier has done to excel and to overcome the alleged deficiencies that prompted the bar.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM INFORMED OF THE INITIATION OF A BAR TO REENLISTMENT?

Contact the Legal Assistance Office to arrange an attorney consultation. You can receive help not only with preparing an initial rebuttal with preparing an appeal but also, in the event a bar is approved.