

Obtain a Duplicate DD-214

By Captain Samuel F. Wright, JAGC, USN (Ret.)

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Update on Sam Wright

9.0—Miscellaneous

11.0—Veterans claims

Q: My father was a retired Army Reserve Colonel and a life member of the Reserve Officers Association (ROA). My father graduated from college in 1965 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant, via the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). He then served on active duty for four years, including a year in Vietnam. In 1969, my father was released from active duty and affiliated with the Army Reserve. He served in that capacity for the next 25 years, until he retired in 1994.

My father passed away quite recently, and I am making the funeral arrangements. I heard my father say, on more than one occasion, that he wanted to be buried in a national cemetery operated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). At my request, the funeral director contacted the closest VA national cemetery and was told that we must produce a copy of my father's DD-214 before he can be buried in a national cemetery.

What is a DD-214? If I cannot find this form in my father's papers, how do I obtain a duplicate? Is there a way to obtain the duplicate DD-214 in a hurry, so that we can honor my father's wishes without having to delay the funeral?

A: In 1969, when he left active duty, your father received a very important form—the DD-214. The form shows the date that he entered active duty, in 1965, and the date that he left active duty, in 1969. The form shows that he served in Vietnam for a year. The form shows that he served honorably. If he earned and was awarded any military medals during his active duty period, the DD-214 should show that information.

You need the DD-214 for many important reasons, not just for burial in a VA national cemetery. If you cannot find the DD-214 that you received when you left active duty, you should order a duplicate copy today. The following information is broken down by service to help you obtain copies of personnel records.

¹ I invite the reader's attention to www.roa.org/lawcenter. You will find more than 1700 "Law Review" articles about military voting rights, reemployment rights, and other military-legal topics, along with a detailed Subject Index, to facilitate finding articles about very specific topics. The Reserve Officers Association (ROA) initiated this column in 1997. I am the author of more than 1500 of the articles.

OBTAINING COPIES OF PERSONNEL RECORDS

ARMY

Veterans or retirees separated from the U.S. Army, Army Reserve, or Army National Guard before October 1, 2002, and those who do not have a Common Access Card (CAC) should submit a [SF 180](#) to:

National Personnel Records Center
1 Archives Drive
St Louis, MO 63138-1002

[Request Your Military Service Records Online, by Mail, or by Fax | National Archives](#) or
For Army National Guard Records mail the [SF 180](#) to the Veterans [State Affiliation](#).

NAVY

Navy Personnel Command has a very easy to understand [matrix](#) which will point you toward the proper record location based on your dates of service and nature of discharge.

MARINE CORPS

A former Marine may request a copy of his/her records directly from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) by writing:

National Personnel Records Center
1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO 63138-1002
Telephone: 314-801-0800, Fax: 314-801-9195, E-mail: MPR.center@nara.gov

COAST GUARD

The [USCG Military Records Section](#) creates and maintains headquarters level military personnel data records. Please email or FAX your requests to the Military Records Section at:

Email: MR_CustomerService@uscg.mil
FAX: 202-372-8440

If you separated or retired from the Coast Guard prior to 1 October 2006, make requests to obtain copies of DD-214's, Personnel Records, Medical & Dental Records, and Service Medals, etc. to the National Personnel Records Center. Requests may be made online by the veteran or next of kin of a deceased, former member of the military. If you are not the veteran or next of kin, complete [SF 180](#) and send the completed form to:

National Personnel Records Center
1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO 63138
Telephone: (314) 801-0800

If you separated or retired from the Coast Guard on or after 1 October 2006, please fax a completed and signed SF-180 to 202-372-8440.

Or

Mail to: Commander, Personnel Service Center PSC (BOPS-C-MR), United States Coast Guard
Stop 7200 2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE Washington, DC 20593-7200

AIR FORCE

Once a member separates and/or retires, they can access their entire master personnel file (which includes DD Form 214's, NGB 22's and evaluation reports), without a Common Access Card, through a Department of Veterans Affairs web site call eBenefits. The web site is <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>

- First-time users will need to register by clicking on the "Register" button on the top right-hand side of the eBenefits homepage.
- Users will need to register for the PREMIUM account for access to all services. Once the account is established, the user will have continued access to the web site to retrieve their master personnel file.

The eBenefits help desk number is 800-983-0937, please contact them for further help or instructions on how to use the eBenefits web site.

Captain Samuel F. Wright, JAGC, USN (Ret.)

BACKGROUND

I served in the Navy and Navy Reserve as a Judge Advocate General's Corps officer and retired in 2007. I am a life member of ROA. I have dealt with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Veterans' Reemployment Rights Act (VRRA—the 1940 version of the federal reemployment statute) for 35 years.

I developed the interest and expertise in this law during the decade (1982-92) that I worked for the United States Department of Labor (DOL) as an attorney. Together with one other DOL attorney (Susan M. Webman), I largely drafted the proposed VRRA rewrite that President George H.W. Bush presented to Congress, as his proposal, in February 1991. On 10/13/1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law USERRA, Public Law 103-353, 108 Stat. 3162. The version of USERRA that President Clinton signed in 1994 was 85% the same as the Webman-Wright draft. USERRA is codified in title 38 of the United States Code at sections 4301 through 4335 (38 U.S.C. 4301-35). I have also dealt with the VRRA and USERRA as a judge advocate in the Navy and Navy Reserve, as an attorney for the Department of Defense (DOD) organization called Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), as an attorney for the United States Office of Special Counsel (OSC), as an attorney in private practice, and as the Director of the Service Members Law Center (SMLC), as a full-time employee of ROA, for six years (2009-15).

Please see Law Review 15052 (June 2015), concerning the accomplishments of the SMLC. My paid employment with ROA ended 5/31/2015, but I have continued the work of the SMLC as a volunteer.

EDUCATION: BA 1973 Northwestern University, JD (law degree) 1976 University of Houston, LLM (advanced law degree) 1980 Georgetown University.

CONTACT INFORMATION: You can reach me by e-mail at SWright@roa.org or by telephone at 800-809-9448, ext. 730. I will provide up to one hour of information without charge. If you need more than that, I will charge a very reasonable hourly rate. If you need a lawyer, I can suggest several well-qualified USERRA lawyers.