



DD Form 214: Issue to Reserve Component Servicemembers upon Career Milestones

ROA urges Congress to direct all members in the reserve component to receive a DD Form 214 at career milestones or, if already retired, upon request by the service member, family, or legally recognized entity. (Title 10 U.S.C. §1168)

With the reserve components an integral and essential part of the “Total Force,” relying on them as never before, it is essential that all RC members and veterans be able to present for purposes of employment, benefits, and recognition, an accurate representation of their service.

The DD Form 214 is the chief document used for this purpose, yet it is seriously inadequate for members and veterans of the RC. Not all RC members receive a DD 214 or National Guard Bureau (NGB) Form 22 when they are separated, discharged, or retired from military service. Yet, VA and other federal, state and even local government agencies normally require veterans to provide a copy of the DD 214 to qualify for veteran benefits.

According to VA Pamphlet 26-7, “There is no one form used by the Reserves or National Guard that is similar to a DD Form 214...” that meets “Proof of Service Requirements” (Chapter 2). By reforming key components of DD 214, RC members and veterans will receive credit for their entire service, equitably, vis-a-vis members of the active component.

Within DoD, a separate form for RC use is contemplated; ROA considers this a problematic workaround: it will take decades if not forever to “get the word out” throughout the federal, state and local agencies accustomed to the authority of the DD 214 as the sole source document for proof of service.

Also, and perhaps more pernicious, it sends a signal that the Total Force is less than total – that the RC gets a different form and, inevitably (as seen by we who are living the issue), the RC will get less-than-equitable treatment. We do think reforms toward an integrated pay system would enable an automated DD 214 resulting in reduced personnel time and costs to produce the form.

ROA’s recommendation to issue the DD 214 in the same manner as done with the active component would help RC servicemembers, their families, and veterans obtain state and federal veteran benefits.

For example, the civil service requires a DD 214 when applying for federal jobs claiming veteran’s preference. Active duty personnel apply for civil service jobs upon separation and have an updated DD 214. RC servicemembers and veterans, however, may not have updated or complete DD 214s, especially if portions of their service did not qualify for an update. ROA had to fight with VA to get a Korean War veteran his grave marker with the war medal inscribed, as the DD 214 was issued before he received the final citation for the medal.

During the Cold War, RC members experienced nothing like current and continuing active service demands. From 1990 on, we have mobilized the National Guard and Reserve continuously. Because of the outdated policies applying to RC DD 214 issuance, RC members have faced bizarre situations: one RC pilot received more than 50 DD 214s *in a year* because of the number of times he flew in and out of the Area of Responsibility.