OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
5113 Leesburg Pike, Suite 601
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22041

Reserve Forces
Policy Board

INFO MEMO

OCT 26 2016

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

DepSec Action_____

FROM: MajGen Arnold L. Punaro, USMCR (Ret), Chairman, Reserve Forces Policy Board

SUBJECT: Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board on the Selection and Assignment Process for the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB)

- The RFPB is a federal advisory committee established in law to provide you with independent advice and recommendations on strategies, policies and practices designed to improve and enhance the capabilities, efficiency, and effectiveness of the reserve components.

- The RFPB met on September 15, 2016 and voted to recommend the Department restore the billet held by the Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) to a nominative status in accordance with the requirements of the RFPB's standing federal statute. The Director of Administration and Management (DA&M) policy memorandum dated 16 August 2016 [TAB A] restricts the RFPB's ability to fulfill its statutory mission under 10 U.S.C. § 10301 by eliminating the ability to fill its SEA billet with the best-qualified nominee from *any* of the reserve components, as nominated by their leadership, recommended by the RFPB Chair, and designated by the Secretary of Defense. Further, this internal DoD policy is in direct contravention to the statute establishing the RFPB and its statutory requirement. Multiple attempts to work with Washington Headquarter Services (WHS) on this issue were stonewalled.

- 10 U.S.C. § 10301 [TAB B] provides the statutory authority for the establishment and operation of the RFPB. This statute sets forth the civilian and military membership of the Board, including its Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA). Subsection (c)(8) of 10 U.S.C. § 10301 states that the SEA shall be "[a] senior enlisted member of a reserve component recommended by the chair and designated by the Secretary of Defense, who shall serve without vote as enlisted military adviser to the chair." Other parts of subsection (c) regarding RFPB membership delineate specific service and/or component requirements for certain members. Because the role of the SEA is to represent and advise the Board on issues impacting enlisted personnel from *all* reserve components, the intent of subsection (c)(8) is to select an SEA from *any* of the reserve components and does not specify service or component requirements for this position, saying only that the nominated member (and by extension, his/her service and component) shall be selected and recommended by the RFPB chair and designated by the Secretary of Defense.

- Recent DOD efficiency initiatives reduced the number of military billets assigned to the OSD Staff resulting in all remaining military billets in each OSD component being allocated "on a specific *by service* basis." This means that future fills of these billets would be made in accordance with the service currently listed in the OSD manpower database. As per the

DA&M policy letter, "for respective OSD offices, this now precludes the ability to change service affiliation of specific positions (and precludes the ability for nominations from multiple services for specific positions)." This letter also restates the authority of the Washington Headquarters Service (WHS) Military Personnel Division to make decisions with respect to billets supporting OSD. Based on the policy change, but without adequate examination of RFPB statutory requirements, WHS has determined that the billet held by the RFPB's SEA should be exclusively sourced by the U.S. Army Reserve, based solely on the coding of the SEA billet at the time of the policy change. The RFPB disagrees with this determination.

- The RFPB SEA has a specific statutory mandate that is unique compared to other military personnel assignments across OSD. The WHS interpretation of the new DA&M policy runs contrary to the language of 10 U.S.C. § 10301 and improperly constrains the authority of the RFPB Chair and the Secretary of Defense to select a member from any component other than the U.S. Army Reserve. The intent of 10 U.S.C. § 10301(c)(8) empowers the SEA to represent the equities of all seven reserve components in a manner that is bolstered by his/her selection from nominees amongst the seven reserve components. Also, the new policy runs contrary to past WHS and RFPB practices which used a nominative process to select the best qualified SEA candidate from nominees chosen by the leadership of each reserve component. This process has generated outstanding senior enlisted advice to the RFPB and enabled the Board to better fulfill its statutory function.

- To resolve this issue, the RFPB recommends that you direct DCMO to:

  - Direct WHS to conform to the RFPB statute, that the SEA be selected by a *nominative* selection/fill process. This would comply with the requirements and intent of Title 10, USC Section 10301.

  - Define 'nominative' in accordance with CJCSI 1001.01B (Joint Manpower and Personnel Program Instruction), Enclosure H, 2, f (2) [TAB C]:

    - "Nominative Positions. In the joint arena, nominative positions refer to military positions for which all Services are expected to submit nominations for personnel assignment, but no single Service is designated to fill the billet permanently."

- As required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the recommendations were deliberated and approved in an open, public session. The briefing presented to and approved by the Board [TAB D] will be posted to the RFPB web site. Background information about the RFPB is at TAB E.

COORDINATION: NONE

Attachment(s):
As stated

Prepared by: CAPT Jay Gagne, 703-681-0600

TAB A

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
9010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-9010

ADMINISTRATION

AUG 16 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR, NET ASSESSMENT

SUBJECT: Office of the Secretary of Defense Military Personnel Management

Efficiency initiatives in recent years, and the most recent major headquarters adjustments, reduced the number of military billets assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) staff. There once was a small reserve that provided some flexibility in assignments, but that no longer exists. All remaining billets for military personnel positions have been allocated to each OSD component, on a specific "by service" basis. All future military assignment actions must match the documented allocation, by service, to your component as recorded in the OSD manpower database – the Fourth Estate Manpower Tracking System (FMTS).

For respective OSD offices, this now precludes the ability to change service affiliation of specific positions (and precludes attempting to obtain nominations from multiple services for specific positions). The Military Departments manage assignments and military resource allocation to OSD in the aggregate, not by OSD component; therefore, if an OSD component attempted to obtain a military individual of a different service – one that does match with their documented requirement – there would be staffing consequences across the rest of the OSD staff. This change includes the Military Assistants of the OSD component Presidentially Appointed, Senate-confirmed personnel, who must also be filled based upon the service affiliation and billet allocation in the FMTS database.

Relatedly, we applied the future military billet reductions, by Fiscal Year in the aggregate, for each OSD component. We are now working with your representatives to identify and record the specific positions in your component that those reductions will be applied to.

Lastly, as a reminder, consistent with the authorities and direction in DoD Instruction 1315.18, Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments, and DoD Directive 1315.07, Military Personnel Assignments, the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) Military Personnel Division is the office with authority to manage military assignments, reassignments, and release actions for OSD.

Thank you in advance for your support in adapting to the new military assignment process. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Curt Smolinsky, Chief, OSD/WHS Manpower Management Office, at curt.d.smolinsky.civ@mail.mil.

Michael L. Rhodes
Director

TAB B

AMENDMENTS

2011—Subsec. (a)(3)(A)(i). Pub. L. 112–81 substituted "if qualified may be appointed" for "if qualified be appointed".

2000—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(A)], substituted "October 5, 1999," for "the date of the enactment of this section".

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(a)(1)(A)], inserted "and is age 60 or older at that time" after "unreduced annuity".

Subsec. (a)(3)(A). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(a)(1)(B)], inserted "or is under age 60 at that time" after "unreduced annuity" in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (a)(3)(B)(i). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(B)], substituted "October 5, 2000" for "the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection".

Subsec. (a)(3)(B)(ii)(I). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(a)(1)(C)], inserted "and becoming 60 years of age" after "unreduced annuity".

Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(A), (C)], substituted "October 5, 1999," for "the date of the enactment of this section" and "April 5, 2000" for "six months after the date of the enactment of this section".

Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(a)(2)(A)], inserted "and is age 60 or older" after "unreduced annuity".

Subsec. (b)(2)(A). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(A)], substituted "October 5, 1999," for "the date of the enactment of this section" in introductory provisions.

Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(a)(2)(B)], inserted "or is under age 60" after "unreduced annuity" in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (b)(2)(B)(i). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(B)], substituted "October 5, 2000" for "the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection".

Subsec. (b)(2)(B)(ii). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(A)], substituted "October 5, 1999," for "the date of the enactment of this section" in subcls. (I) and (II).

Subsec. (b)(2)(B)(ii)(I). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(a)(2)(C)], inserted "and becoming 60 years of age" after "unreduced annuity".

Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title X, § 1067(a)(20)(D)], substituted "during the period beginning on October 5, 1999, and ending on April 5, 2000," for "within six months of the date of the enactment of this section".

TRANSITION PROVISION

Pub. L. 106–398, § 1 [[div. A], title V, § 525(b)], Oct. 30, 2000, 114 Stat. 1654, 1654A–109, as amended by Pub. L. 107–107, div. A, title X, § 1048(f)(1), Dec. 28, 2001, 115 Stat. 1228, provided that:

"(1) An individual who before the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 30, 2000] was involuntarily separated or retired from employment as an Army Reserve or Air Force Reserve technician under section 10218 of title 10, United States Code, and who would not have been so separated if the provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of that section, as amended by subsection (a), had been in effect at the time of such separation may, with the approval of the Secretary concerned, be reinstated to the technician status held by that individual immediately before that separation. The effective date of any such reinstatement is the date the employee resumes technician status.

"(2) The authority under paragraph (1) applies only to reinstatement for which an application is received by the Secretary concerned before the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 30, 2000]."

TEMPORARY PROVISION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME FOR SEPARATION OR RETIREMENT

Pub. L. 106–65, div. A, title V, § 522(a)(3), Oct. 5, 1999, 113 Stat. 597, provided that: "During the six-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 5, 1999], the provisions of subsections (a)(3)(B)(ii)(I) and (b)(2)(B)(ii)(I) of section 10218 of title 10, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1), shall be applied by substituting 'six months' for '30 days'."

CHAPTER 1009—RESERVE FORCES POLICY BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Sec.
10301. Reserve Forces Policy Board.
10302. Army Reserve Forces Policy Committee.
10303. Navy Reserve Policy Board.
10304. Marine Corps Reserve Policy Board.
10305. Air Force Reserve Forces Policy Committee.

AMENDMENTS

2006—Pub. L. 109–163, div. A, title V, § 515(b)(4)(G), Jan. 6, 2006, 119 Stat. 3235, substituted "Navy Reserve" for "Naval Reserve" in item 10303.

§ 10301. Reserve Forces Policy Board

(a) IN GENERAL.—As provided in section 175 of this title, there is in the Office of the Secretary of Defense a board known as the "Reserve Forces Policy Board" (in this section referred to as the "Board").

(b) FUNCTIONS.—The Board shall serve as an independent adviser to the Secretary of Defense to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on strategies, policies, and practices designed to improve and enhance the capabilities, efficiency, and effectiveness of the reserve components.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Board consists of 20 members, appointed or designated as follows:

(1) A civilian appointed by the Secretary of Defense from among persons determined by the Secretary to have the knowledge of, and experience in, policy matters relevant to national security and reserve component matters necessary to carry out the duties of chair of the Board, who shall serve as chair of the Board.

(2) Two active or retired reserve officers or enlisted members designated by the Secretary of Defense upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the Army—

(A) one of whom shall be a member of the Army National Guard of the United States or a former member of the Army National Guard of the United States in the Retired Reserve; and

(B) one of whom shall be a member or retired member of the Army Reserve.

(3) Two active or retired reserve officers or enlisted members designated by the Secretary of Defense upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the Navy—

(A) one of whom shall be an active or retired officer of the Navy Reserve; and

(B) one of whom shall be an active or retired officer of the Marine Corps Reserve.

(4) Two active or retired reserve officers or enlisted members designated by the Secretary of Defense upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the Air Force—

(A) one of whom shall be a member of the Air National Guard of the United States or a former member of the Air National Guard of the United States in the Retired Reserve; and

(B) one of whom shall be a member or retired member of the Air Force Reserve.

(5) One active or retired reserve officer or enlisted member of the Coast Guard designated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(6) Ten persons appointed or designated by the Secretary of Defense, each of whom shall be a United States citizen having significant knowledge of and experience in policy matters relevant to national security and reserve component matters and shall be one of the following:

(A) An individual not employed in any Federal or State department or agency.

(B) An individual employed by a Federal or State department or agency.

(C) An officer of a regular component of the armed forces on active duty, or an officer of a reserve component of the armed forces in an active status, who—

(i) is serving or has served in a senior position on the Joint Staff, the headquarters staff of a combatant command, or the headquarters staff of an armed force; and

(ii) has experience in joint professional military education, joint qualification, and joint operations matters.

(7) A reserve officer of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps who is a general or flag officer recommended by the chair and designated by the Secretary of Defense, who shall serve without vote—

(A) as military adviser to the chair;

(B) as military executive officer of the Board; and

(C) as supervisor of the operations and staff of the Board.

(8) A senior enlisted member of a reserve component recommended by the chair and designated by the Secretary of Defense, who shall serve without vote as enlisted military adviser to the chair.

(d) MATTERS TO BE ACTED ON.—The Board may act on those matters referred to it by the chair and on any matter raised by a member of the Board or the Secretary of Defense.

(e) STAFF.—The Board shall be supported by a staff consisting of one full-time officer from each of the reserve components listed in paragraphs (1) through (6) of section 10101 of this title who holds the grade of colonel (or in the case of the Navy, the grade of captain) or who has been selected for promotion to that grade. These officers shall also serve as liaisons between their respective components and the Board. They shall perform their staff and liaison duties under the supervision of the military executive officer of the Board in an independent manner reflecting the independent nature of the Board.

(f) RELATIONSHIP TO SERVICE RESERVE POLICY COMMITTEES AND BOARDS.—This section does not affect the committees and boards prescribed within the military departments by sections 10302 through 10305 of this title, and a member of such a committee or board may, if otherwise eligible, be a member of the Board.

(Added Pub. L. 103–337, div. A, title XVI, § 1661(b)(1), Oct. 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 2980; amended Pub. L. 107–296, title XVII, § 1704(b)(1), Nov. 25, 2002, 116 Stat. 2314; Pub. L. 109–163, div. A, title V, § 515(b)(1)(CC), Jan. 6, 2006, 119 Stat. 3233; Pub. L. 111–383, div. A, title V, § 514(a)(1), Jan. 7, 2011, 124 Stat. 4211.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

Provisions similar to those in this section were contained in section 175 of this title, prior to amendment by Pub. L. 103–337, § 1661(b)(3).

AMENDMENTS

2011—Pub. L. 111–383 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to the composition and functions of the Reserve Forces Policy Board.

2006—Subsec. (a)(7). Pub. L. 109–163 substituted "Navy Reserve" for "Naval Reserve".

2002—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 107–296 substituted "of Homeland Security" for "of Transportation".

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2011 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 111–383, div. A, title V, § 514(a)(2), Jan. 7, 2011, 124 Stat. 4213, provided that: "The amendment made by paragraph (1) [amending this section] shall take effect on July 1, 2011."

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2002 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 107–296 effective on the date of transfer of the Coast Guard to the Department of Homeland Security, see section 1704(g) of Pub. L. 107–296, set out as a note under section 101 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Chapter effective Dec. 1, 1994, except as otherwise provided, see section 1691 of Pub. L. 103–337, set out as a note under section 10001 of this title.

§ 10302. Army Reserve Forces Policy Committee

(a) There is in the Office of the Secretary of the Army an Army Reserve Forces Policy Committee. The Committee shall review and comment upon major policy matters directly affecting the reserve components and the mobilization preparedness of the Army. The Committee's comments on such policy matters shall accompany the final report regarding any such matters submitted to the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff.

(b) The Committee consists of officers in the grade of colonel or above, as follows:

(1) five members of the Regular Army on duty with the Army General Staff;

(2) five members of the Army National Guard of the United States not on active duty; and

(3) five members of the Army Reserve not on active duty.

(c) The members of the Committee shall select the Chairman from among the members on the Committee not on active duty.

(d) A majority of the members of the Committee shall act whenever matter affecting both the Army National Guard of the United States and Army Reserve are being considered. However, when any matter solely affecting one of the reserve components of the Army is being considered, it shall be acted upon only by the Subcommittee on Army National Guard Policy or the Subcommittee on Army Reserve Policy, as appropriate.

(e) The Subcommittee on Army National Guard Policy consists of the members of the Committee other than the Army Reserve members.

TAB C

d. Position Status. Will default to "Work in Progress." Shows status of position (e.g., proposed, approved). See FMTS User's Guide on how to change from "Work in Progress" to "Proposed" status.

e. Title. This field is automatically populated when the skill code or job code is entered. However, this field can be overridden to reflect the current position title.

f. Position Type. Required for each military position.

(1) Rotational Positions. Rotational positions should be used only where a change of Service representation is essential to the performance of the mission. Adjustments of planned rotational dates of incumbents in rotational positions should be coordinated with the impacted Service at least 9 months in advance.

(2) Nominative Positions. In the joint arena, nominative positions refer to military positions for which all Services are expected to submit nominations for personnel assignment, but no single Service is designated to fill the billet permanently. Since nominations occur in the execution year, Services cannot plan or program for these positions, causing chronic difficulties in planning and personnel assignment. The use of nominative positions should be minimized because the Services cannot program for them.

(3) Dual-Hatted Positions. A position requiring grade O-6 and above with duties in two organizations (e.g., Combatant Command and one of its Service Component commands).

(a) Position Type of "Dual Hat" will be used for each position. The joint position must list the Service Billet ID.

(b) If a joint command carries the position as its authorization, the joint command will list a "1" in each "Funding Value" block for each FY that the position is funded.

(c) If the Service Component command carries the position as its authorization, the joint command will reflect it as unfunded and will list a "0" (zero) in each "Funding Value" block for each FY that the position is unfunded. In such cases, the incumbent in the joint position is not eligible for JDA credit.

(4) NATO Posts. The following "Position Types" are for NATO use only. Definitions of these post types can be found in reference j.

(a) Manpower Overage/National Overage (FMTS code "O")

(b) Non-Quota (FMTS code "Z")

TAB D

Senior Enlisted Advisor Billet Issue

As approved by the Board, 15 Sept 2016

SGM Michael J. Lewis

SEA, Reserve Forces Policy Board

Background/Issue

- Recent DOD efficiency initiatives reduced the number of military billets assigned to the OSD Staff resulting in all remaining military billets in each OSD component being allocated "on a specific by service basis."
  - Per DCMO Memo dated 16 Aug 2016: Future fills must be in accordance with Service listed on file in the OSD manpower database
    - "For respective OSD offices, this now precludes the ability to change service affiliation of specific positions" (i.e. *the billet is non-rotational*)
    - Precludes nominations from multiple services for specific positions
- Impact to RFPB:
  - Removes the ability for RFPB to source the Senior Enlisted Advisor billet *from any of the Reserve Components* as intended by our governing statute, Title 10, USC Section 10301
    - OSD reads our requirement as an AGR from the US Army Reserve (because that's who was filling the billet when the change in policy occurred)
  - Defines the billet as *non-nominative* (contrary to established practice which helps ensure best fill for the position)

RFPB Governing Statutes and Past Selection Process

- Title 10, USC, Section 175. Reserve Forces Policy Board
  - "There *is in the Office of the Secretary of Defense* a Reserve Forces Policy Board. The functions, membership, and organization of that board are set forth in section 10301 of this title."
- Section 10301 (c)
  - "Membership. The Board consists of 20 members, appointed or designated as follows:
    - …(8) A senior enlisted member *of a reserve component* recommended by the chair and *designated by the Secretary of Defense*, who shall serve without vote as enlisted military adviser to the chair."
- Nomination/selection process prior to recent policy change:
  - WHS solicits nominations from each of the reserve components
  - Nominations are endorsed by 3-Star RC Chief then forwarded to RFPB Chairman who selects nominee and forwards to SECDEF for approval/designation
  - Once designated by SECDEF, respective RC of selectee re-aligns a funded billet from their component to the OSD manning document

Recommendations

Due to the unique joint requirements of the Senior Enlisted Advisor, as outlined by statute, the RFPB recommends the Department:

1. Approve an exception to policy allowing the billet held by the SEA to be *rotational and nominative* (i.e. return to former selection/fill process). This would better comply with the requirements and intent of Title 10, USC Section 10301

2. Define 'nominative' in accordance with CJCSI 1001.01B (Joint Manpower and Personnel Program Instruction), Enclosure H, 2, f (2):
   - "Nominative Positions. In the joint arena, nominative positions refer to military positions for which all Services are expected to submit nominations for personnel assignment, but no single Service is designated to fill the billet permanently."

As originally deliberated by the Board

For Board Deliberation and Vote

Recommendations

Due to the unique joint requirements of the Senior Enlisted Advisor, as outlined by statute, the RFPB recommends the Department:

1. Approve an exception to policy allowing the billet held by the SEA to return to a *nominative* selection/fill process. This would better comply with the requirements and intent of Title 10, USC Section 10301
2. Define 'nominative' in accordance with CJCSI 1001.01B (Joint Manpower and Personnel Program Instruction), Enclosure H, 2, f (2):
   - "Nominative Positions. In the joint arena, nominative positions refer to military positions for which all Services are expected to submit nominations for personnel assignment, but no single Service is designated to fill the billet permanently."

As approved by the Board

For Board Deliberation and Vote

TAB E

The Reserve Forces Policy Board – Basic Overview

The Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) is a federal advisory committee mandated by law in the Office of the Secretary of Defense to "serve as an independent adviser to the Secretary of Defense to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on strategies, policies, and practices designed to improve and enhance the capabilities, efficiency, and effectiveness of the reserve components." As required by statute, the board also produces an annual report which the Secretary of Defense transmits to the President and Congress on reserve component matters the board considers appropriate to include in the report.

The board consists of 20 members; a civilian chairman, a general/flag officer from each of the seven reserve components, a two-star military executive, a senior enlisted advisor, plus ten other U.S. citizens, who may or may not be government employees, with significant knowledge of and experience in policy matters relevant to national security and reserve component matters.

The board is supported by a staff consisting of a Colonel or Navy Captain from each of the six DoD reserve components. There is also a Coast Guard staff officer. These officers also serve as liaisons between their respective components and the board. The law requires them "to perform their staff and liaison duties under the supervision of the military executive officer of the board in an independent manner reflecting the independent nature of the board."

Established in 1951, the board is one of the oldest advisory committees in the Department of Defense.

In the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011, Congress significantly revised the operating framework and membership of the RFPB. Previously, other than the chairman, the board included only DoD officials and made recommendations through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. In 2008, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves recommended that the RFPB's governing statute (10 USC 10301) be amended because the board was not structured to obtain and provide directly to the Secretary of Defense a wide range of independent advice on National Guard and Reserve matters due to the nature of its membership and its subordination to other offices within DoD. The revised law was effective 1 July 2011.

On 12 September 2011, retired Marine Corps Major General Arnold Punaro was sworn in as the first chairman of the board under the revised structure. Other new members were sworn in at an organizational meeting on 13 October.

The board is organized into three subcommittees: Ensuring a Ready, Capable, Available and Sustainable Operational Reserve; Enhancing DoD's Role in the Homeland; and Supporting and Sustaining Reserve Component Personnel. Subcommittees meet as required. The full board meets quarterly. The RFPB website is at http://rfpb.defense.gov/.