



**JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER AND FORT POLK
CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5341**



*“ARMY CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROFESSIONALS--
HELPING LEADERS MEET THE MISSION”*

CPAC INFORMATION BULLETIN
NUMBER 36

MAY 2001

MEMORIAL
Day

**COMMERCIAL
ACTIVITIES**



UPDATE

The Management Study provided by the supporting contractor was received, reviewed, and determined to be inadequate. Consequently, the contractor was so informed that the product submitted was unacceptable. As a consequence, a team consisting of installation personnel, the supporting contractor, and the Army Audit Agency (AAA) have been convened to revise the Management Study to ensure the accuracy of the workload data and that the necessary staffing was identified to perform the work as set forth in the specifications contained in the solicitation.

Additional questions have also been received from commercial firms that are in the process of being answered.

Currently, the proposals from the Government and commercial firms are due to be submitted to the Contracting Officer in the Army Atlanta Contracting Center (AACC) on 2 July 2001. However, as a result of the responses to the commercial firms and possible changes resulting from the revision of the Management Study, it is expected that the due date for the

submission of proposals will be extended to August 2001.

If a new date is established for the submission of proposals, an amendment will be made to the solicitation and posted on the AACC web site (<http://www.forscom.army.mil/aacc/>) where the solicitation is currently posted.

RUMOR BUSTER

No, the supporting contractor was not fired.

**PHASE I RIF PLANNING MAJOR
EVENTS**

We are still on schedule with the execution of Phase I of our RIF plan. The controlling Ground Rules have been negotiated and our CPOC partners have commenced the conduct of the MOCK RIF. Absent any unforeseen circumstances, it is expected the MOCK RIF will be completed as scheduled despite our request that work be momentarily discontinued pending the completion of the Management Study. Upon receipt of any changes, our CPOC partners will resume their work.

Our next major event will occur during the period 1 Aug 01 thru 30 Oct 01. We will prepare the Realignment Fact Sheet (RFS) and Voluntary Early Retirement (VERA) Request and synchronize the Civilian Execution Plan (CEP). These documents are required to obtain approval to conduct a RIF and offer VERA.

As is our custom, we will keep the workforce informed as developments occur.

CONTENT

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

Status of Fort Polk CA Study Page 1
Phase I RIF Planning Major Events Page 1

TECHNOLOGY CORNER

The Smartforce Page 2

CIVILIAN PAY CORNER

Civilian Payroll Debt Processing
Procedures Page 3
Bush Recommends 3.6% Raise in 2002 Page 3

TSP CORNER

TSP Rate of Returns Page 3

TSP CORNER Cont.

Open Season Page 4
TSP Contribution Allocations Page 4
TSP Changes and Their Effect on ABC-C and You Page 5
TSP Announces Changes Due to Legislative Updates Page 5

FROM ABC-C

Designation of Beneficiary for FEGLI Page 6

HOW ABOUT THAT

Voluntary Reduction In Force Separation (VRIF) Page 8



**TECHNOLOGY
CORNER**

THE SMARTFORCE

Leveraging technology and employee empowerment are fundamental tenants of our concept of operations defining how the installation will operate in the future. As a result, one of the Command's Human Capital Management strategic initiatives set forth in our strategic plan seeks to embrace continuous learning and empower employees by leveraging technology to improve training opportunities.

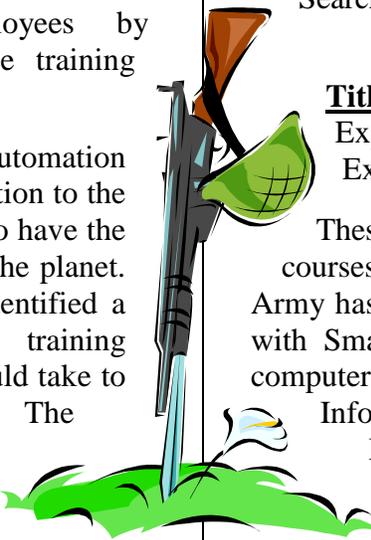
Our initial focus is to enhance the automation skills of the workforce as we transition to the digitized Army. That is, we want to have the most highly trained workforce on the planet. To this end, the Command has identified a core curriculum of web-based training courses that all GS employees should take to enhance their computer literacy. The courses identified are:

**End User Operating Systems
& Tools**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Hrs</u>
Basic IT Concepts I	3
Basic IT Concepts II	3
Using the Computer	3
Info & Communication	4
Windows 98 I	5
Windows 98 II	4

Microsoft Office 2000

<u>Title</u>	<u>Hrs</u>
Beginning Word	5
Intermediate Word	4
Advanced Word	4
Word for Power Users	4
Beginning Excel	3
Intermediate Excel	4
Advanced Excel	3
Excel for Power Users	4
Beginning Access	4
Advance Access	4



Beginning Power Point	4
Advance Power Point	4
Beginning Outlook	4
Advanced Outlook	4
Beginning Frontpage	4
Advanced Frontpage	4

Web End User - Internet/Intranet Skills

<u>Title</u>	<u>Hrs</u>
Basic Concept	3
Using Email	3
Using TELNET, FTP & Gopher	3
Using Newsgroups	3
Searching the Internet	3

MS Internet Explorer

<u>Title</u>	<u>Hrs</u>
Explorer 5.0-Getting Started	4
Explorer 5.0-Up & Running	4

These courses are a part of over 1,400 courses now available for your use. The Army has entered into an enterprise agreement with SmartForce to provide these web-based computer training programs with an Information Technology (IT) focus. Believe it, you can obtain certification level training for over 40 vendor certifications such as MCSE, Microsoft Office User Specialist, Novell CNE, Cisco, Lotus Notes, Intel, Oracle, Project Management and much more. This is the finest technology training available from today's leader in the e-learning industry. As a direct result of this agreement you can:

- Access your training at anytime
- Learn at your own pace
- Prepare yourself to qualify as a Certified Information
- Technology Professional
- Enhance your PC desktop skills
- Achieve essential training goals at No Cost!

To demonstrate its commitment to transforming our workforce to the most highly trained on the planet, the Command has also agreed to establish an Individual Learning Account (ILA) of 113 hours for all employees. This account may be used to enroll in and complete the suite

of courses in our core curriculum on duty time, subject to your supervisor's approval. To activate the ILA, you need only speak with your supervisor, enter into and sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), enroll in a course and track the hours expended during duty hours. Of course, you must always obtain your supervisor's permission before stopping work to complete a course. To facilitate the tracking process, we have also developed a brochure that can be utilized for this purpose.

While our objective is for all GS employees to complete at least one course this year, all employees, regardless of pay plan or service are encouraged to avail themselves of this opportunity. Your ability to fulfill self-improvement goals will provide you with the tools needed to excel in the future. The future is in your hands. Make sure you are Ready! Enroll Today!



After initial registration, access and use of the courseware can be made from any Windows PC (e.g., your personal Internet connection from home). See [Civilian Personnel Bulletin No. 11-01](#) for more details, your organization's POC and the MOU.

\$50 is discovered and corrected within 4 pay periods of the original transaction, with a simultaneous notice being sent to the employee advising him of this 15% offset.

All other civilian payroll debts require a full due-process notification letter to the employee prior to any collection action being initiated by the civilian payroll office.

Bush Recommends 3.6 Percent Raise in 2002

President Bush has recommended that federal employees get a pay raise of 3.6 percent in January 2002. The recommendation came in a formal budget proposal fleshing out details of a budget document released earlier that was silent on the raise but contained an assumption that the raise would be 3.6 percent.



TSP RATES OF RETURN

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent the actual total rates of return used in the monthly allocation of earnings to participant accounts. The returns are shown after deduction of accrued [TSP administrative expenses](#). The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees. The most current C, F, and G Fund rates of return are shown below. Percentages in () are negative. **Returns are updated after the monthly allocation of earnings, usually by the 7th business day of the month.**

	<u>C Fund</u>	<u>F Fund</u>	<u>G Fund</u>
April 2001	7.78%	(0.42%)	0.43%
Last 12 Months* (3/2000 - 4/2001)	(12.95%)	12.46%	6.01%

CIVILIAN PAY CORNER

Civilian Payroll Debt Processing Procedures

IAW the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, civilian payroll debts that are \$50 or less can immediately be deducted from an employee's next biweekly paycheck in full, with a simultaneous notice being sent to the employee advising him of this offset.

Additionally, the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 also allows the payroll office to begin a 15% offset of the employee's future biweekly paychecks. When a debt greater than

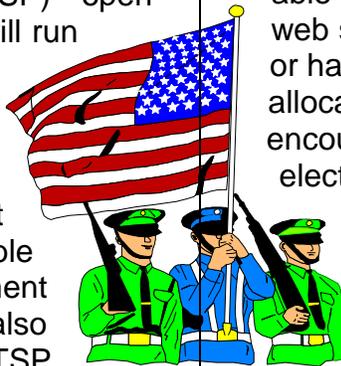
- The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume that earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

OPEN SEASON

The TSP Open Season dates are May 15 – July 31. During this time, all FERS and CSRS employees may enroll in the TSP, regardless of the dates on which they were hired. Employees who are already enrolled in the TSP may also change the percentage of pay they contribute to the Plan. The maximum contribution for FERS employees has increased to 11 percent. The maximum contribution for CSRS employees has increased to 6 percent. To enroll or change your contribution amount, use Form TSP-1.

TSP CONTRIBUTION ALLOCATIONS

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season began on 15 May and will run through 31 July. Department of the Army Appropriated Fund civilian employees are able to contribute an additional 1% of their base pay to the Thrift Savings Plan. They are also able to contribute to two new investment funds (S fund and I fund) and also begin contributing to the TSP without a waiting period. These changes have been publicized in other articles and for additional information on these changes, you may read about them on both the ABC-C Home Page at www.abc.army.mil [<http://www.abc.army.mil/>](http://www.abc.army.mil/) and the TSP web site at www.tsp.gov [<http://www.tsp.gov/>](http://www.tsp.gov/).



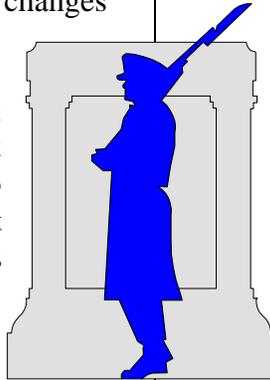
However, what many employees do NOT realize is that beginning May 1, 2001, employees will continue to use the ABC-C web site or telephone system (IVRS) to start, stop or change the amount of the contributions. BUT, the allocation of those contributions among the various investment funds will no longer be able to be processed by ABC-C. Those allocations will have to be processed through the TSP web site or their phone system.

If you are newly enrolled in the TSP, you must wait until you have received your "New Account Letter" before making your first contribution allocation. Initially, contributions made to your account each pay period will be invested in the Government Securities Investment (G) Fund.

There will be no limit on the number of contribution allocations that participants may request, but only one contribution allocation can be made effective on any given business day. Employees will be able to use electronic media (i.e. the TSP web site or the Thriftline 1-504-255-8777) or hard copy forms to request contribution allocations. However, participants will be encouraged to use the more efficient electronic media to request contribution allocations. Electronic and paper contribution allocation requests will generally be effective no later than 2 business days after receipt. There is a new TSP Form 50, Investment Allocation, which will be used for both contribution allocation and interfund transfer requests. Employees can obtain the TSP-50 from their organization's admin office or by visiting the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC). The employee will complete the TSP-50 per its instructions and mail it directly to the TSP finance center.

TSP CHANGES AND THEIR EFFECT ON ABC-C AND YOU! ATTENTION, ATTENTION, ATTENTION!

Beginning with the 15 May – 31 July 2001 Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season, Department of the Army Appropriated Fund civilian employees will be able to contribute an additional 1% of their base pay to the Thrift Savings Plan. They will also be able to contribute to two new investment funds (S fund and I fund) and also begin contributing to the TSP without a waiting period. These changes have been publicized in other articles and for additional information on these changes, you may read about them on both the ABC-C Home Page at www.abc.army.mil and the TSP web site at www.tsp.gov. However, what many employees do **NOT** realize is that beginning May 1, 2001, employees will continue to use the ABC-C web site or telephone system (IVRS) to start, stop or change the amount of the contributions. **BUT**, the allocation of those contributions among the various investment funds will no longer be able to be processed by ABC-C. Those allocations will have to be processed through the TSP web site or their phone system. There will be no limit on the number of contribution allocations that participants may request, but only one contribution allocation can be made effective on any given business day. Employees will be able to use electronic media (i.e. the TSP web site or the Thriftline) or hard copy forms to request contribution allocations. However, participants will be encouraged to use the more efficient electronic media to request contribution allocations. Electronic and paper contribution allocation requests will generally be effective no later than 2 business days after receipt. There is a new TSP Form 50, Investment Allocation, which will be used for both contribution allocation and interfund transfer requests. A future Bulletin will announce the availability of the new form, so



stay tuned. ABC-C will put it on the web site when available and TSP will certainly add it to their web site.

TSP ANNOUNCES CHANGES DUE TO LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Public Law 106-361 and the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 provided several changes to the rules and regulations of the Thrift Savings Plan which will be implemented beginning with the open season 15 May – 31 July 2001. Below are some of the frequently asked questions extracted from the TSP web site:

When can I sign up for the TSP under the new eligibility provisions of Public Law 106-361?

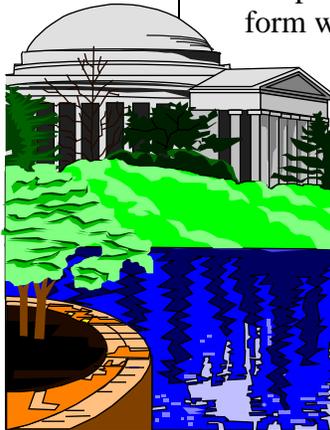
On October 27, 2000, President Clinton signed Public Law 106-361, which provides for immediate participation in the TSP for newly hired (and rehired) employees covered by FERS or CSRS. Currently, newly hired employees must wait until the second open season after they are hired (a six- to twelve-month period) before they can contribute to the TSP; rehired employees also have a waiting period. Public Law 106-361 allows Federal employees to begin contributing their own money (through payroll contributions) when they are hired. However, this provision applies only to employee contributions; agency contributions remain on the current open season waiting period schedule. We plan to implement this new benefit in conjunction with the May 15, 2001, open season with elections becoming effective in July 2001. Participants who are currently in their waiting periods will be eligible to make a contribution election during the May open season. More information about the implementation of this new benefit will be posted early next year.

What money can be rolled over to my TSP account? Can I roll over my regular IRA into the TSP? How about money from my mutual fund or savings accounts?

Public Law 106-361, signed October 27, 2000, allows direct rollovers from qualified retirement plans established by your previous employer. These plans are limited to pension, profit-sharing, and stock bonus plans, and include 401(k) plans. Public Law 106-361 also allows rollovers from conduit IRAs that were set up to accept distributions from qualified retirement plans. This benefit will be available to participants in July 2001. We will announce a more precise date early in 2001. Rollover forms will be available on the Web site. However, you cannot roll over money from a regular IRA, a mutual fund, or savings account.

How have the contribution limits changed for the TSP?

On December 21, 2000, President Clinton signed the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001. This law contains a provision that increases incrementally the contribution limits to the Thrift Savings Plan for participants covered by FERS and CSRS. FERS employees may elect to contribute up to 11 percent of their basic pay each pay period during the May 15, 2001, open season; CSRS employees may elect to contribute up to 6 percent. These elections will become effective in July 2001. Effective January 2002 and each following year, the contribution limits will increase by one percent until January 2006, at which time the limit will be eliminated completely. The IRS annual deferral limit (\$10,500 for 2001) remains in effect. There is also no impact on either the Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions or the Agency Matching Contributions. This change is **extremely** important to those employees in the FERS retirement plan because a major part of the



retirement plan is the TSP savings. Many FERS employees who submit their retirement packages are shocked at the FERS annuity amounts and at that point, it's too late to contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan, so please think seriously about either electing to participate this open season and/or increasing your amount you contribute. You will be glad you did when you're eligible to retire!



**DESIGNATION OF BENEFICIARY
FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
GROUP LIFE INSURANCE**

Where do I send my completed Designation of Beneficiary form, SF 2823?

It depends. Active employees must file the form with their human resources office.

If you receive benefits from the Department of Labor, Office of Workers Compensation Programs **and** you've been receiving these benefits for less than 12 months **and** you are still on the agency's rolls as an employee, you also must file the form with the human resources office.

If you are a retired employee, you must file the form with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

If you are on compensation and are separated from your agency or have been receiving compensation for 12 months or more, you must file the form with the Office of Personnel Management, Retirement Operations Center, Validation Section, Boyers, PA 16017.

The appropriate office must receive the Designation of Beneficiary form before your death in order for the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) to pay the benefits. If you do not file it with the proper office, OFEGLI will pay benefits in

accordance with the next prior designation on file or under the order of precedence starting with the widow or widower, if there is no designation.

What if I die on a Sunday and I mailed my completed Designation of Beneficiary form the day before, Saturday? Will the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) pay the benefits according to my new designation?

Your employing office or the Office of Personnel Management, if applicable, must **receive** your Designation of Beneficiary before you die for your Designation to be valid. A Designation delivered on a weekend or Federal holiday is not "received," and is not valid, until the next workday. If you die before your employing office receives the new Designation of Beneficiary, the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance will pay benefits in accordance with the next prior Designation on file or under the order of precedence starting with the widow or widower, if there is no designation.

When should I file a new Designation of Beneficiary form?

You may want to consider completing a new designation form whenever you have a significant change in your life, such as a marriage, divorce, or death. Be sure it remains accurate and reflects your intentions. You should also file a new designation whenever a beneficiary's address changes. Failure to do so may mean that the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance cannot locate your beneficiary and therefore cannot pay him or her the death benefits.

If my child is not yet of legal age, do I have to appoint a legal guardian if my child is my beneficiary?

You should consult an attorney concerning such legal issues as appointing a guardian for

your minor child. If you should die while your child is still a minor and he/she is entitled to your life insurance benefits, the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) will not pay benefits to your minor child.

If the benefits payable are \$10,000 or less, OFEGLI may pay the benefits to a surviving parent when the parent assures OFEGLI, in writing, that he/she will use the funds for the sole benefit of the child.

If benefits exceed \$10,000, payment depends on whether the State where the child lives requires a guardian.

If the State requires a guardian, a court-appointed guardian can file a claim for death benefits on behalf of your minor child. In those cases, guardianship must be established before payment can be made. Natural parentage is not automatic guardianship. The

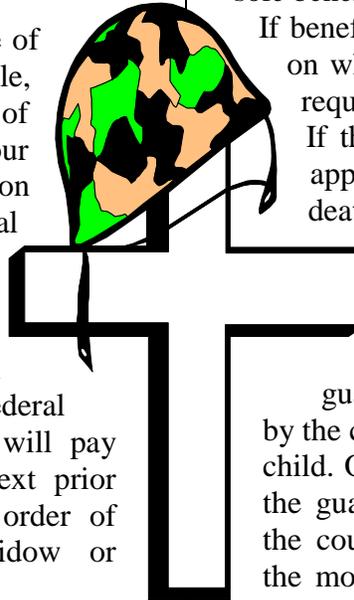
guardian must have the authority granted by the court to collect money on behalf of the child. OFEGLI would then make payment to the guardian who would have to answer to the court regarding how/when he/she spent the money, depending on the details of the guardianship granted by the court.

In those States that do not require the court appointment of a guardian, OFEGLI will pay the benefits to the person responsible for the care of the child when he/she assures OFEGLI, in writing, that he/she will use the funds for the sole benefit of the child.

If there is not a guardian and one won't be appointed and the State requires one and the proceeds are greater than \$10,000, OFEGLI will open an interest-bearing account payable to the minor upon reaching the legal age.

What does it mean to reach the legal age?

The legal age or age of adulthood for the FEGLI Program is 18, unless the state in which the minor lives has established a lower age of adulthood. In that case, the legal age is the lower age.



HOW ABOUT THAT

VOLUNTARY REDUCTION IN FORCE SEPARATION(VRIF)

WHAT IS VRIF?

Section 1034 of the Fiscal Year 1996 National Defense Authorization Act authorizes the Secretary of Defense to allow the release of an employee who volunteers for separation in a reduction in force (RIF) even though the employee is not otherwise subject to the separation under RIF. Use of this Provision has the same objective as other downsizing initiatives, that is, to allow DoD activities and installations to minimize the impact of downsizing by encouraging employees to volunteer to be separated in lieu of another employee who is slated to be separated by RIF procedures. Some employees, who can afford to leave the Federal service but whose retention standing precludes separation, would like to be separated by RIF in order to be eligible for entitlements such as severance pay or continued health benefits coverage.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Under the authorities and conditions described below, this provision may be used when acceptance of the offer to volunteer for separation will result in saving an employee otherwise scheduled for RIF separation.

- a. Voluntary separation can be effected only during formal RIF, that is, where official RIF notices will be issued.
- b. Both employees must be in the same competitive area. This program may be expanded to include other DoD competitive areas in the commuting area in coordination with, and under procedures issued by, the Civilian Assistance and Reemployment

(CARE) Division Civilian Personnel Management Service.

c. Matches of separation volunteers with those affected by the formal RIF will be based on the similarity of their positions. Any position affected by the RIF can be identified for placement of a RIF separation volunteer, if separation of the RIF volunteer would result in the cancellation of a RIF separation action, and the subsequent placement of a RIF-affected employee. The placement cannot result in promotion. Activities should determine the best match for placement, considering qualifications for placement in the volunteer's position, the ability of the RIF-affected employee to do the work of the similar position, and cost effectiveness.

- (1) When there are more volunteers than needed and all are equally good matches, activities will process voluntary RIF applicants in order of seniority using the Service Computation Date (SCD) for leave.
- (2) When there are fewer volunteers than needed and there are equally good matches for placement, activities will select RIF-affected employees for placement in order of RIF retention standing.

d. If, at any point in the RIF process, it is determined that the voluntary separation would not result in saving a RIF-affected employee, the voluntary separation will be canceled. Volunteering for separation under the provisions of this policy does not confer RIF assignment rights.

e. Volunteering for RIF separation under these provisions is strictly a voluntary action on the part of any employee to whom this option is offered. Such employee shall not be forced or coerced in any way to volunteer for RIF separation.

WHO CAN USE VRIF AUTHORITY?

Heads of Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and their subordinate activities and installations are authorized to offer voluntary RIF separation to eligible individuals in accordance with the above policy.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR VRIF?

a. Only U.S. citizen employees of the Department of Defense, who meet the definition of competing employee in 5 Code of Federal Regulations 351.203, are eligible for voluntary separation participation. In addition, RIF separation volunteers:

- (1) must be serving under an appointment without time limitation,
- (2) may not be reemployed annuitants, and,
- (3) may not have a pending or approved application for disability retirement.

b. Generally, employees occupying critical or hard-to-fill positions, or with critical knowledge or skills, will not be allowed to participate except with the approval of the Commanding Officer or activity head. Employee participation in the voluntary RIF separation program is not an entitlement and is subject to the discretion of the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and their activities and installations.

WHAT CONDITIONS ARE AFFECTED IF I PARTICIPATE IN VRIF?

Separation volunteers are ineligible for registration in the Priority Placement Program, non-federal hiring incentives, and voluntary separation incentives. Separation volunteers who are reemployed by the Federal government are subject to the rules governing repayment of severance pay.

HOW DOES THE VRIF PROCESS WORK?

a. Separation volunteers will be issued RIF separation notices under this authority effective on the RIF effective date. The notice shall advise them of their entitlements under RIF.

b. Volunteers must sign a statement that they realize the action is irrevocable once they have been issued a RIF separation notice. However, activities may cancel the action if necessary.

c. Separation volunteers will be treated as involuntary RIF separations, with all entitlements, except for the conditions outlined above.

ARTICLES FOR BULLETIN

If you have any suggestions on topics or issues that you would like addressed in future bulletins, please submit them to one of the following:

1. **Civilian Personnel Advisory Center**
ATTN: Bill R. Chance
2. romerok@polk-emh2.army.mil
3. **Call 531-4020/4708**

Suggestions will be reviewed and addressed if at all possible.

//ORIGINAL SIGNED//
DONALD R. MALLET
Director, Civilian Personnel
Advisory Center

