



Highlights of [GAO-04-805](#), a report to Congressional Committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act directed GAO to assess the special pays and allowances for servicemembers who are frequently deployed for less than 30 days, and to specifically review the family separation allowance. GAO's objectives were to assess (1) the rationale for the family separation allowance eligibility requirements, including the required duration of more than 30 consecutive days away from a member's duty station; (2) the extent to which DOD has identified short-term deployments as a family separation allowance issue; and (3) what special pays and allowances, in addition to basic military compensation, are available to compensate members deployed for less than 30 days.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends DOD take the following actions: (1) set a timetable for establishing criteria to implement the high deployment allowance; (2) define, as part of the criteria, what constitutes frequent short-term deployments within the context of the cumulative day requirement as stated in the high deployment legislation; and (3) determine, as part of the criteria, ways of targeting the deployment allowance to selected occupations. DOD partially concurred with our recommendations because it views the deployment allowance as a peacetime authority. GAO believes our current wartime situation does not prevent DOD from setting a timetable for establishing criteria.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-805.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Derek B. Stewart at (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov.

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Has Not Implemented the High Deployment Allowance That Could Compensate Servicemembers Deployed Frequently for Short Periods

What GAO Found

In 1963, Congress established the family separation allowance to help offset the additional expenses that may be incurred by the dependents of servicemembers who are away from their permanent duty station for more than 30 consecutive days. Additional expenses may include the costs associated with home repairs, automobile maintenance, and childcare that could have been performed by the deployed servicemember. Over the years, the eligibility requirements for the family separation allowance have changed. Today, the family separation allowance is authorized for officers and enlisted in all pay grades at a flat rate. The rationale for establishing the 30-day threshold is unknown.

DOD has not identified frequent short-term deployments as a family separation allowance issue. No proposals seeking modifications to the family separation allowance because of frequent short-term deployments have been provided to DOD for consideration as part of DOD's Unified Legislation and Budgeting process, which reviews personnel pay proposals. Further, DOD officials were not aware of any specific concerns that have been raised by frequently deployed servicemembers about their eligibility to receive the family separation allowance. Based on group discussions with Air Force strategic airlift aircrews, who were identified as examples of those most likely to be experiencing short-term deployments, we did not identify any specific concerns regarding the lack of family separation allowance compensation associated with short-term deployments. Rather, many aircrew members indicated the high pace of operations and associated unpredictability of their schedules was a greater concern due to the negative impact on their quality of life.

In addition to basic military compensation, DOD has several special pays and allowances to further compensate servicemembers deployed for short periods. Servicemembers who are deployed for less than 30 days may be eligible to receive regular per diem. The per diem amount varies depending upon location. For example, these rates range from \$86 to \$284 per day within the United States and from \$20 to \$533 per day when outside the United States. However, DOD has not implemented the high deployment allowance designed, in part, to compensate those frequently deployed for shorter periods. Congress supported DOD's legislative proposal to authorize a monthly high deployment allowance. This allowance permits the services to compensate members for lengthy as well as frequent shorter deployments. The most recent amendment to this provision provides DOD with the authority to adjust a cumulative day threshold to help compensate servicemembers experiencing frequent short deployments. DOD has flexibility to exclude all occupations except those that it wishes to target for additional pay. However, DOD has not established criteria to implement this allowance, nor has DOD set a timetable for establishing such criteria.