

SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

Experiences of Junior Soldiers in Alaska – OMB Control Number 0702-ALSK

1. Need for the Information Collection

The Experiences of Junior Soldiers in Alaska information collection was requested by the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA) via tasker. Further, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (ASA(M&RA)) requested expansion of this information collection to support Quality of Life initiatives. Delays in the approval will impact the timeline of this project, which was briefed to the VCSA and the ASA(M&RA). Furthermore, it will delay ARI in providing findings that may inform decision-making in Alaska.

The VCSA identified a list of taskers for the Arctic, one of which was the Longitudinal Assessment of Option 20 Cohorts (Task ID 1.12 and 1.13, see Arctic Task List). The Army Research Institute (ARI) created a data collection plan, which was briefed to and approved by the VCSA (3 Jun 22), thus authorizing ARI to complete this collection. Subsequently, the plan was briefed to the ASA(M&RA) (1 Aug 23) who supported the initiative and requested specific items to be included in our collection.

Based on the tasker from the VCSA, ARI is completing a longitudinal examination of performance, attitudes, and behaviors of Option 20 Soldiers. Option 20 Soldiers are Soldiers who *select* to come to Alaska as their first duty station at time of enlistment. Non-Option 20 Soldiers are those who are *assigned* to Alaska but did not choose it as their first duty station. The U.S. Army has initiated a variety of actions aimed at improving quality of life for Soldiers in Alaska in order to reduce rates of harmful behaviors and increase the ability for Soldiers to thrive (Army Public Affairs, 2022). This assessment is aimed at exploring potential differences between 1) Option 20 Soldiers and non-Option 20 Soldiers in Alaska, and 2) Soldiers in Alaska and Soldiers at other duty locations. We are specifically concerned with examining Soldier attitudes, behaviors, attrition, and performance, along with other variables of interest. Our research will facilitate scientific assessments of personnel dimensions that are essential to recruitment, selection, and assignment. Our research may also inform future Army policies that may enhance the Soldier lifecycle and the readiness effectiveness of the Army.

Overall, this survey also contributes to broader longitudinal efforts. Indeed, this survey is nested within a broader longitudinal effort to track Soldiers over time to reduce survey burden and demands on Soldier time. The larger longitudinal research captures operational data from accessions testing, e.g., Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS) to support DoD efforts to continuously validate the tests as predictive of service member performance. This survey also contributes to an effort to develop and evaluate measures for selecting new Soldiers into the Army and helping them choose the MOS in which they will be most successful. Data from Soldiers in Alaska will be utilized to support both efforts, although neither are the main objective of the project.

2. Use of the Information

We will be collecting data from a sample of Army junior enlisted Soldiers in Alaska. These individuals are responding to the information collection because they are Soldiers in Alaska who are at their first duty station. There will be one data collection instrument that will be put into the Army's version of Verint for Soldiers to complete online. PII is collected from Soldiers within the assessment that the current instrument is nested in for the longitudinal effort. The data collection is not anonymous to allow for longitudinal analysis. The assessment will use a multiple choice format with a few options for short answer responses. The survey is voluntary; participants will be tasked to arrive at the data collection but are not required to participate in the assessment. Once participants access the assessment online, they will complete the informed consent and assessment, and return the data collection via Verint. There are not any invitations or other communications sent to the respondent associated with the information collection.

A unit point of contact (POC) will instruct Soldiers to report to a computer lab, where they will be provided with a survey link. The informed consent instructs participants that their participation is voluntary, provides expectations for data confidentiality, and provides the sponsor and purpose of the effort. We have provided a brief script beyond the informed consent below, which has been approved by HRPP.

- After providing Soldiers with the link, the Option 20 Team will inform participants:
 - “There are some items on this assessment that ask about your mental and physical health and whether you have had thoughts about suicide. If any of your responses indicate that you may be thinking about harming yourself or others, we are required to inform your company commander. Additional information will be provided in the Informed Consent Form that you will see online before deciding whether to complete the assessment. Paper copies of the consent form are available for you to take with you today, along with a page of mental health resources with phone numbers you can call if you want to speak with someone confidentially.”
- As noted above in the script, a list of mental health resources (including Military OneSource and two suicide hotlines) will be available in hard copy for participants to take with them after the session (please see “Planned Procedures” document for additional details).

At the conclusion of the data collection, the data will be downloaded to a secure laptop for analysis by IRB approved members of the research team. Analyses on the data will be conducted by IRB approved members of the research team. The end result of this project will be a dataset that can be analyzed and used to explore potential differences between 1) Option 20 Soldiers and non-Option 20 Soldiers in Alaska, and 2) Soldiers in Alaska and Soldiers at other duty locations. Broadly, understanding if there are differences between Soldiers who select to come to Alaska in comparison to those who are assigned to Alaska may be used by the U.S. Army to help inform the direction of selection and assignment policies. These results may also broadly be used as a source of information for stakeholders in order to better understand Soldiers' experiences in Alaska. The Army will own all data collected.

3. Use of Information Technology

One hundred percent (100%) of the assessment data will be collected electronically. This percentage of responses is collected via the Army-owned version of Verint, which is operated on an Army IT system. All participants will access the assessment via a CAC-enabled computer.

4. Non-duplication

The information obtained through this collection is unique and is not already available for use or adaptation from another cleared source.

5. Burden on Small Businesses

This information collection does not impose a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses or entities.

6. Less Frequent Collection

This data collection will be collected one time. If the data collection is not conducted, ARI will not be able to complete the longitudinal examination of Option 20 Soldiers nor comply with the VCSA and ASA(M&RA) directives.

7. Paperwork Reduction Act Guidelines

This collection of information does not require collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines delineated in 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Consultation and Public Comments

Part A: PUBLIC NOTICE

A 60-Day Federal Register Notice (FRN) for the collection published on Tuesday, February 13, 2024. The 60-Day FRN citation is 89 FR 10052.

No comments were received during the 60-Day Comment Period.

A 30-Day Federal Register Notice for the collection published on Thursday, June 6, 2024. The 30-Day FRN citation is 89 FR 48402.

Part B: CONSULTATION

No additional consultation apart from soliciting public comments through the Federal Register was conducted for this submission.

9. Gifts or Payment

No payments or gifts are being offered to respondents as an incentive to participate in the collection.

10. Confidentiality

Participant names, date of birth, DoD ID, and demographics. This information is necessary in order to link participant data collected in this assessment to outcomes available in Army databases, e.g., training completion, attrition. Thus, the data collection is not anonymous. The information system used to collect participant responses has an approved PIA. PII is protected by following procedures for database management, as outlined in the SORN. Only project staff who have been approved by the ARI Institutional Review Board will have access to the databases/datasets. All data will be stored on government computers to protect PII.

This data collection instrument requires a Privacy Act Statement (PAS). I have attached the PAS and it is provided to the respondent within the assessment in Verint. The MARS platform consists of Verint, MARS test and MARS production servers, and the ATO covers the MARS platform.

The SORN associated with this information collection (A0602 AHRC-ARI, Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Project Files) can be accessed at the following link:
<https://dpcl.d.defense.gov/Privacy/SORNSIndex/DOD-wide-SORN-Article-View/Article/570080/a0602-ahrc-ari/>.

The information collection requires a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA). The DD Form 2930 for Measurement Assessment and Research System (MARS) is attached.

Records Schedules:

1. Internal Confidential Data from Projects Conducted IAW Federal, DoD, and Army Regulations

Use as soon as possible, then destroy. Examples:

- Use DODID or other identifying numbers to link different sets of data, then remove these identifiers from the data.
- Transcribe recordings as soon as possible but keep for up to six (6) years after publication of initial report for possible future analysis before destroying.
- Digitize handwritten notes as soon as possible, then shred.

2. De-identified or Unidentified Data from Projects Conducted, IAW Federal, DoD, and Army Regulations, by ARI, Individuals under Contract to ARI, or Individuals in receipt of a Grant from ARI.

Transfer paper records to NARA no more than thirty (30) years after publication of final report. Transfer electronic records to NARA no more than five (5) years after publication of final report. Longer retention is authorized if required for business use by the originating office.

11. Sensitive Questions

The assessment contains five (5) sensitive questions concerning suicidal ideation. These questions were utilized by EPICON research, which refers to epidemiological consults that the Defense Center for Public Health Aberdeen (previously the Army Public Health Center) conducted for Army installations with a perceived increase in suicide. These previously administered items will be utilized because of the increased interest on suicidal ideation at Army installations, particularly in Soldiers stationed in Alaska. These items will only be administered to Soldiers in Alaska.

The ASA(M&RA) also specifically asked for suicidal ideation questions to be included in this protocol.

We will be checking our assessment results after each administration for suicidal ideation. If a Soldier expresses suicidal ideation, we will contact their company commander via encrypted email, as recommended by Army legal representatives as well as our counselor POC in Alaska. We have prepared a planned procedures document, but have also outlined procedures below:

- o The Company Commander will receive an initial email informing them of the study. They will be informed that they may be contacted if their Soldier expresses suicidal ideation and that they need to acknowledge that they received the email. (See email templates in “Emails to Commanders” document.)
 - Company Commanders are the level of commander with the most contact with Soldiers. This plan is consistent with AR 600-92, Section 1-33.d, which states that Commanders of companies, detachments, and equivalent units are responsible for ensuring that Soldiers “are encouraged to seek assistance if they are experiencing challenges or have been identified with suicide-risk symptoms.”
 - Participants will be told in the Informed Consent Form that their Company Commander will be notified if any of their responses during the assessment indicate that they may be thinking about harming themselves or others.
 - To ensure that the correct commander is identified for each participant, the spreadsheet on which participants sign in at the start of each session will request that participants provide the name of their company and commander.
- o If we do not receive a response from the Company Commander within the requested time frame, we will contact our counseling POC by phone or email and ask him to connect us with the behavioral health (BH) specialist for the appropriate Battalion. Either our POC or a member of the research team will call the BH specialist and request that they reach out to the Company Commander. The BH specialist will not be given information about any particular research participant, but instead will simply be asked to ensure that the Company Commander is aware of the email from the research team and responds in a timely manner. If we do not receive a response after the BH specialist reaches out to the Company Commander, a member of the research team will go to the Commander’s office (see “Planned Procedures” document).

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument

Experiences of Soldiers in Alaska Option 20 Survey

- a) Number of Respondents: 400
 - b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
 - c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 400
 - d) Response Time: 30 minutes
 - e) Respondent Burden Hours: 200
- 2) Total Submission Burden
- a) Total Number of Respondents: 400
 - b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 400
 - c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 200

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

- 1) Collection Instrument
- Experiences of Soldiers in Alaska Option 20 Survey
- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 400
 - b) Response Time: 30 minutes
 - c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$13.34
 - d) Labor Burden per Response: \$6.67
 - e) Total Labor Burden: \$2,668
- 2) Overall Labor Burden
- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 400
 - b) Total Labor Burden: \$2,668

The hourly wage was determined by taking the average 2023 salary of junior enlisted Soldiers from the manpower rates available online

(<https://www.dfas.mil/MilitaryMembers/payentitlements/Pay-Tables/Basic-Pay/EM/>).

13. Respondent Costs Other Than Burden Hour Costs

There are no annualized costs to respondents other than the labor burden costs addressed in Section 12 of this document to complete this collection.

14. Cost to the Federal Government

Part A: LABOR COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Collection Instrument
- Experiences of Soldiers in Alaska Option 20 Survey
- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 400
 - b) Processing Time per Response: 2 hours
 - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$45
 - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$90
 - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$36,000

- 2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
 - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 400
 - b) Total Labor Burden: \$36,000

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 1) Cost Categories
 - a) Equipment: \$0
 - b) Printing: \$0
 - c) Postage: \$0
 - d) Software Purchases: \$0
 - e) Licensing Costs: \$0
 - f) Other: \$0
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: \$0

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$36,000
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$0
- 3) Total Cost to the Federal Government: \$36,000

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

This is a new collection with a new associated burden.

16. Publication of Results

We anticipate publishing the results of this effort as part of an ARI technical report in the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC.mil). This would occur towards the end of the project (i.e., June 2024 or later). We also intend to conduct briefings to Army stakeholders, as appropriate. We anticipate beginning data collection after we receive approval (i.e., April 2024) and completing data collection in Spring to Fall 2024. The data collection timeline may be extended, pending approval.

17. Non-Display of OMB Expiration Date

We are not seeking approval to omit the display of the expiration date of the OMB approval on the collection instrument.

18. Exceptions to "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Submissions"

We are not requesting any exemptions to the provisions stated in 5 CFR 1320.9.