

Assured Access Authority: What it means to YOU

Navy Reserve Sailors serve in many ways, providing strategic depth and delivering operational capabilities to the Navy, Marine Corps and Joint Forces worldwide, from peace to war. Federal law provides the authority for Reserve Sailors to serve on active duty. The law also places limits on when and how many Reserve Component service members the President or secretaries of the services can call up to active duty.

The FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a new activation authorization that will allow Reserve Component (RC) units to be assigned to preplanned force requirements (such as periodic, rotational deployments) as part of the Global Force Management Allocation Plan. This new “Assured Access Authority” is in addition to current and other new emergency mobilization authorities.

What does this law mean for Navy Reserve Sailors? We asked the Navy Reserve's top leaders to share their thoughts about this new authority.

- Vice Admiral Dirk Debbink, Chief of Navy Reserve/Commander, Navy Reserve Force
- Rear Admiral Lothrop S. "Buzz" Little, Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command (CNRFC)
- Rear Admiral John “Chris” Sadler, Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve (CNAFR)
- FORCM (AW) Chris Wheeler, Navy Reserve Force Master Chief

TNR: What do Sailors need to know about Assured Access Authority?

VADM DEBBINK: With this new law, Commanders and Force planners will have assured access to the Navy Reserve for preplanned deployments. This authority is good for Navy Reserve Sailors, good for the Navy and good for the nation. It reflects the readiness and capability our Force has demonstrated since 9/11.

FORCM WHEELER: I see it as an exciting opportunity for some of our Sailors to serve forward. While the vast majority of routine deployments will still be performed by the active Navy, some Reserve units will be a part of planned deployments, doing important work at the tip of the spear.

RDML SADLER: This law will codify and make easier what the men and women of Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve have been doing for years: deploying overseas in support of the Navy and the joint team. Our people will continue to be where the action is, doing the kind of missions we Sailors find personally and professionally rewarding. When mobilized for preplanned deployments, Navy Reserve Sailors will be doing real and meaningful work as part of the Navy Total Force, fully aligned with CNO’s Tenets: Warfighting First, Operate Forward, and Be Ready.

RDML LITTLE: It is another way for us to be part of a great team. The Navy is organized, trained and equipped to deter, fight and decisively win wars. Navy Reserve Sailors – “Ready

Now, Anytime, Anywhere” – provide our Nation on-demand expertise, getting the right Sailor with the right skills at the right place at the right time for the right cost. This new law gives the Navy the ability to assign Reserve Component units to pre-planned force requirements will help the Navy deter, fight and decisively win wars.

TNR: How soon can Sailors expect to see these deployment opportunities, how long will they be, and how many Sailors will be needed? How can people volunteer for these missions?

RADM Little: The law requires the Navy to plan and budget Reserve deployments in advance, something we could not do until the law was in place. The Navy inputs to the budget proposal for FY13 (starting 1 October 2012) has already been submitted, so FY14 is the first year the Navy will be able to plan to use this authority. Our Operational Support Officers (OSOs) will be working with supported commands to build these plans.

RADM Sadler: The length of the deployments will vary by unit and mission. The law authorizes activation up to 365 days. Most deployments are four to seven months in length homeport to homeport, and deploying units may participate in pre-deployment exercises and certifications, like COMPTUEX and JTFEX.

VADM Debbink: The vast majority of the Navy’s planned deployments will be performed by the active component. Our Navy Reserve Force is structured with about 2/3 of our force providing strategic depth and 1/3 providing operational support. Honoring our commitment to maintaining a one in six dwell cycle, and looking at the types of units we anticipate to be candidates for deployment, we see an opportunity for 1000-2000 of our Sailors to deploy each year.

To put that number in perspective, we had several years when more than 6000 Navy Reserve Sailors were mobilized for Operation Noble Eagle, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. In recent years, we’ve had to turn away volunteers as these missions have scaled down or ended.

FORCM Wheeler: Because this new law currently authorizes **unit** activations, the best way for our Sailors to be a part of these missions is to seek a billet in operational units. Pay attention in the coming year and be sure you are signed up for GovDelivery, so you can have opportunities delivered to your inbox. And if you are in an operational unit and can’t deploy due to family, work or school obligations, work with your chain of command to find a unit which will allow you to continue serving in a more strategic role. Your service matters!

TNR: What units are likely to be called to duty under this authority?

RDML SADLER: It’s a new law and a different way of looking at the force, so we’re working with the fleet so they understand this authority, how to use it, and how to plan and budget for it. A great example would be the units who are flying our new Fire Scout VTUAVs. These remotely-operated helicopters are a tremendous new capability for the Navy, and the Navy Reserve is literally writing the book on how to use them.

Even without this authority, Reserve Sailors are now making our third Fire Scout deployment, and Sailors who are part of Fire Scout squadrons know that deployment is fundamental to the mission. They join those units like HSC-84, who supports Special Operations Forces in the CENTCOM AOR. They want to deploy and expect to deploy. We believe that this will be the model: deployable units will be comprised of Sailors who volunteer to go there knowing that they will be part of a deployment rotation.

RADM LITTLE: The authority to activate a unit will mean a better experience for our Sailors, too. We will bring Sailors onto active duty one time, on one set of orders, for the duration of the deployment. We won't have to string together multiple sets of ADT, AT, ADSW orders. And with one set of orders, will have fewer issues with pay and benefits.

TNR: What sort of advance notice will Sailors and their families have for these deployments?

VADM DEBBINK: We've made a covenant with our Sailors, their families and their employers to call them only when needed, to give them real and meaningful work, and to return them home as soon as possible. We honor that covenant in both the law and our policies.

Because the authority is designed to meet preplanned force requirements, Navy Reserve Sailors, their families and employers will generally have significant advance notice and time to prepare for a mobilization. This advance notice translates into greater family and personal readiness, resulting in enhanced unit readiness for deployment which service members will find personally and professionally rewarding.

FORCM WHEELER: Sailors will have the same legal rights and protections (such as USERRA protection for employment) as are currently provided for activations and policies regarding dwell time between mobilizations of all types will be maintained.

TNR: Does this mean the Navy Reserve is taking over the Navy's job?

VADM Debbink: The vast majority of routine deployments will still be performed by the active Navy. What Assured Access does is allow for true Navy Total Force planning. It will not matter, and it should not matter, whether the capability resides in the Active Component, the Reserve Component, or a combination of both. Capabilities will reside where they can be most effectively and efficiently provided.

RADM LITTLE: Assured Access is good for the long-term vitality of the Navy Reserve. Because the Navy will know they can access the forces they need, capabilities can be shifted to the Navy Reserve with confidence. In many cases, the Navy Reserve is the best and most cost-effective way to provide expertise. Expertise retained in the Reserve Component is far more accessible than trying to re-generate from scratch.

TNR: Does this mean the Navy Reserve will no longer support emergent tasking?

RDML SADLER: No; this new authority does not modify the emergent tasking authorities already available to Congress and the President. Reserve Forces will still be available for activation following significant events around the world and the accompanying declarations by Congress or the President.

RADM LITTLE: The Navy Reserve will still be able to respond to emergencies, declarations of war, and certain other missions under Presidential Reserve Call-up authorities as we have been. Also, all current policies adopted to manage Reserve Sailors' activations are still in effect (i.e. dwell), and USERRA protections for your employment are unchanged.

TNR: How will this impact those who are serving in a non-deploying unit, those in a strategic role instead of an operational role?

FORCM Wheeler: The best advice I can give Reserve Sailors is to choose the career that best fits your life, and do your best in whatever you are doing. Sometimes, you will be able to be more operational. Other times, you might need to devote more time to your family, school, or civilian career. Sustained superior performance in whatever job you take is what leads to advancement. Being operational, whether you are mobilized or perform extended ADT or ADSW, is only as beneficial for your career as your performance in those jobs.

VADM DEBBINK: Whether deployed or serving at home, your service matters. Both facets of our mission – to provide strategic depth and deliver operational capabilities to the Navy, Marine Corps and Joint Forces worldwide, from peace to war – remain as relevant as ever. Whether you are serving in a strategic or an operational role, we value all service, from a few days a year to full-time active duty, honoring the promise of our Navy Reserve Force motto: *Ready Now. Anytime, Anywhere.*

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