UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OCT 2 2 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Direct-Hire Authority for Advancing Military to Mariner Within the Department of War

References: (a) Section 3511(d) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (Public Law 116–92)
(b) Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, "Direct-Hire Authority for Advancing Military to Mariner within the Department of Defense," October 8, 2020 (rescinded)

Merchant mariners provide the critical, credentialed workforce required to crew and maintain vessels delivering global logistics to U.S. forces. Expedited hiring for this workforce is therefore vital to sustain readiness and meet operational demands. Reference (a) provides that the Secretary of War has direct-hire authority (DHA) to employ separated members of the Uniformed Services with valid Merchant Mariner licenses or sea service experience in support of national maritime needs.

The attachment to this memorandum provides streamlined guidance for using the DHA in reference (a) and rescinds reference (b). This guidance removes unnecessary administrative burdens and supports expanded use of the DHA across the Department by allowing the DoW Components to more quickly and efficiently hire veterans with Merchant Mariner licenses.

The Secretary may noncompetitively appoint qualified candidates to certain positions in the competitive service in the Department without regard to 5 U.S.C., Chapter 33, Subchapter I. The requirements of 5 U.S.C. § 3326(b) do not apply to the hiring of a separated member of the Uniformed Services under this authority. Section 3321 (competitive service probationary period) and section 3323 (automatic separations, reappointment, and reemployment of annuitants) of 5 U.S.C., Chapter 33, Subchapter I, and the corresponding Code of Federal Regulations provisions will continue to apply to hiring under this authority.

My point of contact is Mr. Michael A. Cogar, Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Civilian Personnel Policy, at (703) 571-9282 or michael.a.cogar3.civ@mail.mil.

Anthony J. Tata

Attachment:
As stated

Attachment

DIRECT-HIRE AUTHORITY FOR ADVANCING MILITARY TO MARINER WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

1. Authority.

a. Pursuant to section 3511 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (Public Law 116–92), the Secretary of War has direct-hire authority (DHA) to employ separated members of the Uniformed Services whose training and experience in the Uniformed Services qualifies for credentialing from the United States Coast Guard National Maritime Center.

b. The Department will use this authority without regard to the provisions of 5 U.S.C., Chapter 33, Subchapter I, other than sections 3321 and 3323.

c. This authority is delegated to the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Directors of the Defense Agencies with personnel appointing authority, (hereafter referred to as "DoW Components"). Further delegation must be in writing.

d. DoW Components must maintain records on their use of this authority and must submit usage reports upon request. This authority does not have an expiration date.

2. Use of DHA.

This DHA enables the Department to recruit and appoint separated members of the Uniformed Services who are qualified candidates without regard to 5 U.S.C. § 3326(b). The following principles shall be followed when exercising this authority:

a. A highly-qualified workforce is critical to the Department's mission.

b. Merit factors shall be the basis for selecting individuals for positions.

3. Covered Positions.

This DHA may be used to appoint individuals at the GS-15 and below (or equivalent grades).

4. Qualified Candidates. Candidates must:

a. Possess a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Merchant Marine Credential that:

(1) Has been signed by the holder and duly authorized Coast Guard official;

(2) Is not expired (i.e., no more than 5 years beyond the date of issuance);

(3) Has not been suspended or revoked; and

(4) Shows no evidence of tampering;

b. Be an individual who:

(1) Is retiring or is retired as a member of the Uniformed Services;

(2) Is voluntarily separating or voluntarily separated from the Uniformed Services at the end of enlistment or service obligation; or

(3) Is administratively separating or has administratively separated from the Uniformed Services with an honorable or general discharge characterization.

5. Announcement and Assessment Process.

a. Public notice is not required; however, if posting job opportunity announcements, DoW Components must use announcements that are concise, easily understood, and meet the Office of Personnel Management and Merit Hiring Plan standards, as appropriate.

b. DoW Components must ensure that merit system principles are followed when posting advertisements and announcements, receiving applications, referring candidates, and notifying applicants regarding receipt and status of their applications.

c. Appointments under this authority are subject to the Priority Placement Program. Procedures applicable to the use of direct hiring authority may be found in the Priority Placement Program Handbook, Chapter 4, Appendix B.

6. Appointing Authority.

Appointments may be made on a permanent, term, or temporary basis using the following Legal Authority code/Legal Authority:

Z5CAI/Direct-Hire Auth (Military to Mariner), Sec 3511(d), PL 116-92, 12.20.2019

7. Oversight and Accountability.

a. The Assistant Secretary of War for Manpower and Reserve Affairs oversees the development of DoW civilian personnel policy covered by these procedures.

b. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Civilian Personnel Policy is responsible for the development of implementing guidance and policies.

c. The Director, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisor Service (DCPAS) will oversee and monitor use of this authority throughout the Department.

d. DoW Components are responsible for oversight, accountability, and reporting to DCPAS concerning use of this authority. Each DoW Component is responsible for determining the appropriate use of this DHA to meet workforce needs, ensuring implementation is in accordance with Merit System Principles and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

e. Documentation for appointments made under this authority must be sufficient to allow reconstruction of actions taken and must be maintained for a time frame consistent with other appointing authorities.

f. Appointments under this authority will be evaluated as part of the DoW Human Capital Framework.