

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH MAJOR ROY WHITLEY, U.S. ARMY, PROJECT MANAGER FOR RETROACTIVE STOP-LOSS SPECIAL PAY SUBJECT: STOP-LOSS PAY CLAIMS PROCESSING TIME: 1:03 P.M. EST DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

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KAYLA MUNRO: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us for a special Bloggers Roundtable. We're pleased to have with us today Major Roy Whitley, the Army's project manager for retroactive stop-loss special pay. He's here with us to provide a status update on the Army's first month of processing claims for this new benefit. Major Whitley will explain the Army's system for processing the estimate 120,000 eligible claims, as well as answer any questions about receiving the pay.

Following a few minutes of remarks, we'll begin to take your questions. And please remember to keep your mute button on when not asking a question. Thank you again, Major Whitley, for taking time to be here today. And I'll let you begin with your opening remarks.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Yeah, well, good afternoon, folks. And thanks for having me and giving me the time today. We all know this is a hot topic, a very hot topic. It's been a very hot topic for me for the last month.

And what I want to do is cover a couple broad areas to make sure we get a good baseline for what this is and what it is not. First of all, the most important thing is that our office was stood up by law, starting -- we were assigned in June to make stop-loss payments. My office is in the business of making the payments, verifying the claims that the soldiers are making. That's our only purpose there. We are there -- (audio break) -- cases to make sure as many people -- (audio break).

So to that end, we have to comply with existing laws and policies, and that's really what's causing a lot of delay in the start-up period.

Now, we have to go back eight years, so it's 2001 to 2008. And for those that I haven't spoken to yet, stop-loss is a force management

solution, it is not a compensation tool. So, historically when there's been stop-loss, it was used to stabilize the force, the force going forward, deploying and close engaging bad guys.

Now, because of the language in the bill, supplemental in June, we have to turn it into a compensation program. That standard is a bit higher. And unfortunately, that leaves a lot of anxiety out there in the field, which is hopefully what we'll cover today, and you guys will be able to get the word out, calm things down a bit.

We are up and running. We are collecting the e-mails. We are getting the cases. But we're still relatively early. We're not quite at the one-month mark. And we do have to realize that there is controlling legislation that's watching the program. At the end of the year, we have to report to Congress who has been denied payment, and we have to be able to track that by name and how much.

So again, we are in the make-the-payment business, not the hold-the-payment-back business.

So the other thing I'd like to point out -- people are concerned about priorities, what's the priority. The top priority are the wounded folks. So when we see the one comes in that's wounded, we really do stop all presses and get a handle on that case.

The HRC Command is taking care of all the deceased service members and their families personally, so that's not even in this program. So we're trying to segregate those out so it's as painless as possible for those folks. And everyone else -- and you're probably reading the blogs today -- are responding based on the e-mail we sent out last night with how we see their case. And other than that, I think that we can start going through the questions that you have, and I'll answer them as clearly and concisely as I can.

MS. MUNRO: Mike Schindler with the SeattlePI, if you'd like to go ahead and ask a question.

Q I'm sorry, I had to unmute there. I think I want to go back to exactly who is eligible. I think there's some misconception as far as who's eligible. Is it -- for example, Major Whitley, does the eligibility -- for example, say somebody signed up for four years and they have an eight-year service obligation.

If they are extended beyond their initial four-year active period, do they still qualify for stop-loss? Does it extend beyond the ETS? Or is it through the eight-year period?

Does that make sense?

MAJOR WHITLEY: I know exactly what you're talking about.

Every one of these topics -- I'm sure every question that we ask -- we actually have a mock trial at the PMO shop when we see them come

in. And we really run these to the ground. And then we talked about them in the pay -- compensation -- intelligence and compensation office.

They all have nuances. And what you're asking is one of the finer ones. And I'll be as clear as I can. Who's eligible? First of all, all servicemembers -- enlisted, warrant officer and commissioned officer -- all components are entitled. So the entitlement is to everyone that was in the service.

Your question about the ETS dates, and you're referencing folks that end up in the IRR, Individual Ready Reserve. If a soldier has a contract period, say, four years, he has an ETS date. After his start date, it's four years later.

If that person -- soldier, he or she -- is extended beyond their ETS from active duty and they continue on, that is stop loss. If that soldier gets out of their ETS, enters the IRR and then is called back, they are within an eight-year hold.

So it's a very subtle line. So if you were standing there at Fort Bragg and you had an ETS of next month and you were told, you're stop-lossed, and we held you beyond your ETS, that four-year mark, you are stop-lossed till whenever you have your next ETS. And that's what we're looking for.

On the dash-fours, we're looking for the gap from an established ETS to a later one. A lot of the confusion has been caused by this eight-year mark. (Inaudible.) You know, the clarity or the policy -- I thought that's how the question was asked, because we're answering specific soldier questions.

A lot of folks are being pulled back from the IR. And they think they're stop-lossed.

And that is not true. If you're being pulled back from the IR and you're still in that eight-year -- remainder of the eight-year window, it could be four and four, five and three. Then you would not be stop-lossed.

Does that answer your question?

Q Yes, sir, it does. Yeah.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Okay, and you're absolutely right. That is probably, because I take a lot of calls usually in the evening, when the call center folks are gone.

And that is a contentious point. And it really is a kind of a fine thing because, you know, if you don't say it -- if I don't say it correctly or clearly, and the person doesn't hear it exactly, it's confusing. And any time it gets repeated beyond this conversation, it's easily misinterpreted, so --

Q So just to clarify, so I'm very clear on this, so if somebody has a four-year active-duty term, and they are getting out, but they are extended beyond their four-year active-duty term, they qualify for stop-loss?

MAJOR WHITLEY: That would be correct --

Q But if they -- if they serve their four years, enter into IRR -- now, what if they enter into reserve status? What if it's a -- you know, a -- well, I guess -- okay, I -- I'm following you. So they --

MAJOR WHITLEY: Okay. Well, let's stick to one question at a time.

Q Yeah.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Okay, so -- because that's what exactly gets confusing. So you've got the answer. Yes --

Q Yeah.

MAJOR WHITLEY: -- (off mike) -- ETS without entering IRR -- eligible. Q Got it.

MS. MUNRO: Hilear Bassett (sp), if you'd like to go ahead and ask a question? Hilear, are you with us?

Jeff Schogol, with Stars and Stripes, if you'd like to go ahead and ask your question?

Q Hey, Major, thanks for taking the time to talk to us.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Nice to talk to you again.

Q Yeah. We've been getting a lot of e-mails basically saying the same -- saying they've either -- people have either been told that their number of months do not match records, or that their Social Security number isn't on the master list. Is it possible to quantify how many of these types of e-mails have been sent out?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Oh, I can tell you how many e-mails went out. Is that your question, how many went out?

Q Well, no, how many people were told that either their -- the number of months don't match the records, or that their Social Security number isn't on the master list?

MAJOR WHITLEY: They're really two different questions, so I'll take those individually. There's a very, very, very small number of Social Security numbers not on the master list. It's less than 20. I'm thinking, if I saw it last time, it was about 12. And really, what they're -- we're doing is trying to figure out -- we're going into the official PERMS database to make sure it wasn't an extra character or something.

All that really says is that we threw the files, as they were submitted, up against 48 million Social Security numbers of people that we knew were in the Army over eight years, by month. And 12, or some really small number, percolated out -- and said we don't -- we don't see these.

So we're going -- just going to let them check the records.

The second part of your question was, how many people -- got your file does not agree with the official record? Many thousands. And the reason that is, is our rules that say unless you meet the 48 million number, that first screening, and if you meet the 120,000 screening, which is this known list of stop-loss soldiers, and that the months you asked for and the months the Army recognizes are equal, you're going to get this notice.

And all the notice really meant to us, and hopefully to the folks out there, is that we are now going to have a case manager going in and auditing, some less deeply than others, but auditing the record. And we know that in the early years, at least '01 through '04, again, because it was not a compensation tool but a force-management tool, the records are very, very accurate, if you will. So we're really just counting months at that point.

So it doesn't mean they were thrown out or ineligible. In fact, a lot of calls I took this morning before I came over, people read that message as it said they were denied; and there's not the word "denied" or anything in there. It just says we're going to be looking more closely at your record. And really, that's a tag for us to do more work, not a tag for the soldier to come back and do more. They have done everything they can possibly do at home. There's nothing more that they have, we don't think, in their garage that can help us.

Q Is there -- do you have an idea of how long it will take to look into that?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Well, the first -- the easy ones are going to be the Social Security numbers. That one is very easy. If your record does not meet -- whatever the exact text was -- does not meet the checklist or the file or documents you've submitted, that will be normal case-management work. What was decided last week, after you and I had spoken, actually -- we said there's a big problem with the e-mails, a lack of response to e-mails, and the feeling that it's just the Black Hole of Calcutta, frankly.

So the question was posed to me by the G-1 shop, can we let them see their file the way we see their file? And I said: Absolutely. And what we're seeing now is the (claimant's ?) view of our world, quite frankly. (Chuckles.) So it's just going to be regular case-management work, and I really don't know how long it's going to take. But I don't think anybody should read anything into it.

Again, back to my first point, this PMO was solely for the purpose of verifying accounts and making payments. It's easier for us before Congress at the end of this year to make the payments than to explain the payments we haven't made. So, believe me, the Army wants to make these payments.

And it's not Army money, by the way. It's not competing with something else. It's Defense money specifically for this program. And Congress is looking like, you know, if there are still claimants out there, we're going to go into the next year if that's required. The committee was pretty clear on the point. Soldiers will get paid, based on this legislation.

Q But what do you have to say to someone who says, "How come you can't tell me how long it's going to be before I get compensated?"

MAJOR WHITLEY: The reason is that so many cases are so unique, it would be a false expectation. And I would like to know that we've run stuff end to end, but since not one payment has been made by DFAS, it's virtually impossible to put a number out there that would give anybody a credible date or time. I just don't know how I could create a number of something we haven't seen run through the system yet.

MS. MUNRO: Karen Francis with Parents Zone, if you'd like to go ahead and ask a question. Q Yes. Thank you very much.

The questions I'm getting on our website is, again, how long is it going to take? And I keep telling people there's no way to tell. But what people are wondering is, how can they check their status? Is there a way to do so? If they haven't gotten an e-mail from you saying, "You have a problem," should they just take it as it's being worked on, or what? I think people are just a little bit perturbed that they can't figure out how to check their status.

Thank you.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Okay. That's a -- certainly a clear question. The answer is, yes, they'll be able to check the status. However, I would say that what they're really going to be seeing is what has happened to their case, not what is happening. So it's not a real-time check.

We know already from the questions coming in that people are asking, "What's my status?" And the real, I think, requirement is, "How close am I to payment?"

Q Yes.

MAJOR WHITLEY: We try to bridge that gap the best we can with the volume we've got. And not that we didn't expect the volume. We know precisely what the volume was going to be, and it's exactly what we expected.

So what we've done is, much like the e-mail that went out last night or yesterday afternoon, as kind of like a first touch to everybody, here's the status, in the interest of clarity -- you know, we let you see your file the way we see it through initial automated scrub. Now the eyes of the case managers are on it.

The next step is when we rev the software again, the website, that folks will be able to go in with their case number and they will see claim status on there. And it will -- hopefully, as we progress they will see the next thing that will happen is, you know, it's being sent to DFAS for payment. If it has been denied or changed, we'll let them know that it's been 12 months -- changed from 12 months to 10 months based on a more thorough audit of their dash-fours or whatever.

But as the case managers have findings, they will post those in the remarks section on their worksheet. That will at least be summarized for the cases.

We're really hoping that the vast majority, frankly 95 percent, we can adjudicate without ever contacting the soldier. We don't even want to contact the soldier, because again they've done all they can do.

It's really now up to us to bring (the records ?) to what the requirement is. And where there is clarification required, we'll get ahold of the soldier.

And one of the best ways, I think -- again after all the concerns about rapid responses to e-mails and things, they'll be able to go in, use their case number on the website and see what has happened to the extent, where's their case right now?

And the real good news will be when they start seeing the payments being made. And I think that will alleviate a lot of anxiety, when the first payments are being made from DFAS.

Q Exactly.

I do have one more question from one of my readers, wanted to know, what would happen if he only has his DD-214 and not his dash- four?

MAJOR WHITLEY: That's very common.

A lot of what we're seeing is what you might consider incomplete packets.

Q Right.

MAJOR WHITLEY: But since we are the federal government, you reached out, you found us through whatever means and you've said, I'm interested in making this claim, that's the requirement.

We have cases where we just have an e-mail and a Social Security Number. Of course, that requires us to create an e-file. All the hard

copies -- we have over 800 mailed-in claims, which is about 10 man-weeks worth of work, to turn those into electronic files.

But every one of those kinds of things, which if they just have 214, that's more than enough to get us started. That gives us their history. All we need to do now is look in perms, which is the official record, for the dash-fours. And we'll have their timeline. We'll have the last day of their previous ETS and their next contract-period start. And that essentially lets us know what the stop-loss period would be.

Q Wonderful. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MS. MUNRO: Shane Ostrom with Military Officers Association of America, did you have a question for us?

Q Sure. Thank you.

Hey, Major, how are you doing? I've got a couple of questions here for you.

One, do you have a handle on the proportion of those e-mails that are going out, that say there's a mismatch problem, versus the total number of apps that you've received?

MAJOR WHITLEY: I will tell you that the amount of e-mails that went out -- what you're looking at is text, as they relate to the categorization I explained to Stars and Stripes in an interview last week.

And so the vast majority -- I don't know what the percentage is; I didn't see that. I just really haven't been in my office enough to see that. But it's the preponderance of that. And really what all this is really saying -- none of us are nervous about it, by the way. All that is really saying is, it's a pretty high standard.

Of these thousands of claims, did they submit more than one document? And when we -- we don't know what the document looks like till we open it. Did they provide a 214 as well as the -- (inaudible) -- dash 4? If the answer is no, then that comes into when those -- we're looking for documents. Did the months and periods of months agree? So you ask for 10 and we think it's 10. Well, was it the same 10 months? And did the (compo ?) agree?

So we're going through a very close check. So the -- we would expect the vast majority to have some kind of case-management work ahead of it. What we use that characterization for is to let us know in advance how to meter the flow of work, which ones are more problematic than the others. So the vast majority is like that. But don't misconstrue that as a broken claim. Don't default to, "This is really bad news." It's kind of anticipated.

Again, I mentioned earlier, the early-on years, '01 at least through '04, was very problematic in terms of -- not bookkeeping, but we

were managing the force. We weren't managing compensation plan; '06 they got very strict with, "This may be a compensation effort." So there is a from-bad-to-worse kind of recordkeeping, if you will. And that's all we're seeing, and it's not shocking, and we're not overwhelmed by it. It's why the PMO is there. Q Final question: This -- and I don't know, because this is so early in the process, if you have a handle on this or not. But, you know, people are -- have their paperwork that they're submitting, and they're looking at the paperwork and they have a certain expectation, of course, of their eligibility and the number of months that they qualify for. Because a 214 is pretty hard and fast, the DD- 214.

So I'm wondering if you have a handle yet on how many of the folks that have popped up as mismatches are legitimate -- there's a problem and that people aren't going to get what their expectations are, versus those that actually end up confirming what the people's expectations were.

MAJOR WHITLEY: You must have been in my office last week. (Laughs.) I had -- what I had asked for was the first sample set we sent to DFAS, as you can imagine, all this serves as a running small sample set to DFAS so we can get it in the hopper and make sure they're in the right configuration.

I'd asked our data center -- because the Army's doing it through a data center because of the sheer volume that we're having, and we knew this would happen -- to give me an equal-to, less-than, or greater-than, for the claimant-to-Army, just so I could try to predict -- (chuckles) -- going forward what the data was going to tell us. Because right now all the data is at rest, which is good. So we get a chance to touch everything for a while.

And interestingly enough, it was about 10 percent were right on the money, the number of months equal. So for the small sample size, about that percentage is right on the money. So if you translate that, that's checks we could write immediately, and that's what we're looking for.

The other two were not wildly off, but you can imagine the rest are off by one month to 17 months. You know, if you had to do a spread -- and I don't remember off the top of my head, but then I had them do a count. So I know precisely how many by month -- how many claims by month are off. When -- in aggregate, when you compare the two, it's about a wash. Folks are asking for fewer months than the Army thinks, and then folks are asking for more months than the Army thinks. So we have our work cut out for us.

But if we paid everybody everything, we'd be pretty darn close. (Laughs.) Just the wrong guys got the wrong amount of money.

Q Okay.

MS. MUNRO: I believe we have a couple of latecomers, if you'd like to state your name and organization and ask a question.

Q Hi. It's Ted Ventresca from Military Information Technology and the IT News Blog. Hello, Major.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Hello.

Q This is a little off topic but it is tied to the project itself. I'm wondering if you could detail possibly the -- any type of IT services or IT support that you're having in going through these 100,000-plus claims and processes you have to go through. Is there any type of specific database or IT-specific elements that are aiding you in making this process move faster?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Well, I will tell you that the Army Data Center Fairfield in California is the data center, so it's a legitimate data center. It's a government facility. And the reason the Army had chosen that, because we know going forward we have to have a very secure and auditable trail for everything that enters. That's why we're taking paper and turning it into electrons and having case managers create an electronic case where none exists, because we want -- we know there's going to be interest later on.

The Oracle database is the database that's being used, and we do daily sync-ups at 10:30 East Coast time, which is 7:30 for those guys.

We (process ?) work every day. What that allows us to do, frankly, is I track all the categories of claims by day. We get daily reports back of where they are.

And when we have to do that e-mail that went out to everybody -- 50,000 e-mails and so on last night, based on our view of the world -- that happens in relatively short order, probably in less than 30 minutes from my finalizing the text to those guys teeing it up, because we are using databases to track all the addresses, all the e-mails. All that information is being customized so that we can feed DFAS going forward in very, very fast timeline.

If that were not the case, you would have the PMO shop becoming a (doctrine ?) repository, which is very bad; you would run the risk of having information assurance issues, which would be very bad, and we would not be able to destroy documents as quickly as we're going to. We really do not want to hold on to any paper things at our PMO shop. So we have Web folks out there. That's where the Web work's being done. It's all being done inside the wire, and all the data's controlled at the data center, and, you know, with the failover, the backup, all the potential forensics we're going to need in the next probably two, three years. A lot of what I'm looking at is months 30 through 36, because there's going to be a lot of auditing. There's going to be congressional interest. There's going to be OMB interest for sure, given that there's over \$500 million involved in this program. And the data center, to the Army's thinking, is the only way to go.

Q That's great information. Thank you, sir.

MAJOR WHITLEY: Sure.

MS. MUNRO: Stacey with Married to the Army, are you on the line with us today?

We can go back to Michael Schindler with SeattlePI. Do you have another question for us, sir?

Q I do. Major, two clarification points. Tracking personal claims: When is that going to be available on the website?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Tracking the claims?

Q If -- yes. If somebody wants to track, put in their claim number or their stop-loss number -- I believe I saw information that that technology was being developed, a mechanism was being developed so they could track their personal claim. Is that accurate? And number -- and if it is, when do you think that will be available?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Yeah. As with other things, this is -- this is really software development. We're revving software, is really what we're really talking about doing here, so I have to -- you know, we're doing change management and so on. But we're thinking at the -- every Friday -- so every Friday, we look at the top 10 changes to the claims side or the case management software, or the third part of that is reporting.

To answer your question, we expect that probably within the next reg, which will be -- outside, it'll be two weeks, so two Fridays. They usually happen on Friday, so two Fridays is what we're looking at.

But it really depends on what's -- you know, they have to advise me what's really involved. To me, what sounds very simple may be a little more complicated.

The e-mail last night, yesterday afternoon, was really the first step of that. Because what's going to happen then, we're opening up a field for the claimant's summary sheet. When they come back in for a revisit, hopefully that's what we're updating and engaging. We're also talking about expanding that to include a remarks section.

So in the event we have to have conversations with a claimant, rather than have this ongoing loop of e-mails that people are dissatisfied with, maybe the best mechanism will be posting kind of like a bulletin on each person's claims sheet, if you will.

We just -- we just haven't worked that one out yet. We're trying to figure out the best way to talk to the people that need help the most. And that's one of the things we're considering. But within two weeks, I would expect that they'll see as a minimum the status of their individual claim. But we're changing it constantly. As we see requests come in, or people are concerned, we think, what can be done? How long can it be done, in terms of timeline?

Q Okay. So those that actually received the e-mail, that were assigned a case manager, how long do you expect it will take, before the case manager is actually able to get back to them?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Well, there won't be -- again it'll be, what has happened to your case? So as soon as we start -- I don't know the answer to that, because there are so many cases in various states.

But as soon as they are uncovered or confirmed or taken off the I'm-in-trouble list, if that's the way you want to look at it, although it is not that -- it's case-management review --

Q Okay.

MAJOR WHITLEY: As soon as they can, because if you're sitting in our PMO shop, every case manager has two screens. One shows the claim. And the other one is the perms record.

So they're sitting there looking at two screens. And it's simply a matter of opening one file, reading it and then opening another and confirming and checking the block. And they can change that.

Again we're not populating things. We're not moving things to perms. We're just trying to find out, why is there a disconnect between what the soldier thinks or is claiming and what the Army thinks?

Because the Army is claiming nothing right now. The Army just says, here's 120,000 people that we think deserve money. And it's not in concert with what the soldier's asking for.

And again our job is to pay the soldier, you know, the proper amount. And we're just trying to reconcile that. x x that. So I really can't tell you, but they'll notice it when it's happening. I just can't promise you how much and how fast.

Q Got it. Okay, very good. Thank you, sir.

MS. MUNRO: Jeff Schogol, with Stars and Stripes, did you have another question for Major Whitley?

Q Yes. How many e-mails went out saying that the months don't match? And how many applications have you gotten so far?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Well, I know that some of the folks out there are creating claims just to keep track of the big number. We have a lot of bad claims, if you will. Right now, the abandonment rate -- and I'm giving you this background information so you get a sense of the number -- the abandonment rate had started at 50 percent. That means, folks will start a claim and then drop it, just like buying a sweater; they never completed the transaction. The first week, there was an abandonment rate of 50 percent. We're now down to 20 percent. So 80 percent of the claims that get started get closed.

That's -- that's kind of like a big macro number. There -- I think -- I was talking to folks this morning before I left. I think we're somewhere approaching 16,000 claim number starters. So there's somebody sitting out there with number 15,000-something. However, as I told you, there's a lot of fake claims and duplicate claims and people -- you know, playing Keno, trying to figure out who's got the latest, biggest number. We're weeding those out.

So legitimate; no crap; all the files in; looks like a guy, looks like a gal that was in the Army; looks like they gave it a shot; looks like they wrote us some documents; got a 214; they think they're onto something; we believe they're onto something: we're looking at right around 10,000 claims.

Q Mm-hmm. And how -- and how --

MAJOR WHITLEY: And how many got an e-mail notice? One hundred percent of the people that have a legitimate e-mail that we could reach out to yesterday, that we could put into a category that you and I spoke about, got that text block that reflects the best we could describe their category.

Q And how many were told that the months don't match?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Oh, I don't know off the top of my head.

Q But if you could put it in, you know, percentage-wise -- 80 percent, 90 percent?

MAJOR WHITLEY: That the months don't match? You know, I -- I'm not going to commit to that, but I will tell you that based on that same -- if the sample size that we referred to, the ones at DFAS that we looked at last week -- probably, 80 percent would be a reasonable number, based on that sample size. But I really don't have the actual numbers from what went out yesterday, because that -- those probably came to my desk after I left.

Q And you said you're not worried about the fact that the majority of people are getting told that the months don't match? Why is that?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Yeah. Because it just tells us that the record-keeping -- especially, again, in the early years -- was not accurate.

If -- we really -- it doesn't bother us that there's a mismatch. I would love it if 98 percent matched, because we would cut the checks tomorrow. All that tells us is that case managers will be looking at a 214 and a dash-four and looking for the (error gap ?). Some folks -- it could off by one month, some folks, and that's not going to be that problematic, because one day of one month counts as a month. There could be a boatload of those. That's going to be very easy to live with.

The ones that are off by two years, that's a little more challenging. And some those think -- folks think they're getting two

years, and they weren't stop-loss because they were indef soldiers. So we really don't know the big (I ?). We knew there was going to be a lot, that everything would not be in agreement, and they're all over. So my point is, we're not -- it's not that we're -- we're not worried. We're not panicked. We kind of knew this was going to happen. And we knew that letting everybody see the world as we saw it would beg questions, but we're willing to do that, because the anxiety is not serving anybody well, quite frankly.

So we're aware of it. We're not panicked about it. We kind of expected it and that we're just going to have to take it through case management, which is what we already knew. And the soldiers don't always have all the records. They freely admit that. That's why we see a 214 and not all the dash-fours. And we don't see all the pages to the dash-four, but we know that there are about five steps we need to take to kind of bring these things to closure.

Q Mm-hmm. And you can't estimate about how long it'll take the case manager to go through -- if you got an e-mail that said the months don't match, how long would it take the case manager to that resolve that?

MAJOR WHITLEY: We don't know. The plain figures for handling a case -- this is a standard normal case -- is somewhere in the three- to four-minute range, is what we're -- as a work-flow kind of thing. But obviously the more problematic -- the bigger the delta and the more documents we can't find -- and today I was -- looked through one. It was a -- before he left, it was a senior NCO, Special Operations, had an ETS, but had no records, that his first ETS was canceled. We looked at (perm ?) to see there's a counseling that he had to go to, to get his ETS changed. We had that record that he did not have. That took the subject matter expert in our office probably two minutes.

So it sounds like a daunting task. It's a challenge, but it's the way the system is set up. We have to go back, we have to look at the official record and just find the dates. It's -- timeline- building is what we're doing. Does that help?

Q Yes. Thank you.

MS. MUNRO: Karen Francis, with Parents Zone, did you have any last questions for Major Whitley?

Q No, I didn't. Thank you very much. You've answered it all.

MS. MUNRO: You're welcome.

Shane Ostrom, with Military Officers Association of America?

Q No, I'm good.

MS. MUNRO: Was there anybody else on the line that had another question for Major Whitley?

Q Yes. Kayla (sp)?

MS. MUNRO: Yes.

Q Josh Wick from Army News Service. I just had a quick clarification for the major. Retroactive stop-loss special pay is a program that's distinctly different from the stop-loss special pay program; correct?

MAJOR WHITLEY: Yes. I missed that bullet. Yes. Retroactive is covered in the legislation from June 2009 supplemental, and it goes from '01 through '08. And some of the folks are having a difficulty because they're trying to apply to the retro office for the '09 payments. So they're two separate and distinct programs.

Q Okay. Excellent. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

MS. MUNRO: Are there any final questions for Major Whitley?
(No response.)

At this time, Major Whitley, if you'd like to go ahead and make any closing remarks for the group? MAJOR WHITLEY: Actually, all those questions you asked, you've either sent to me or I've seen. (Laughs.) And believe me, we talk about them every night.

What I ask you to do is keep in mind that we're aware of the anxiety out there. And frankly, the program is (the proximal cause ?) of that. The reason they set up the office in the Army is because the problem is so large, the issue is so big, and we're going to work this thing through.

And quarterly we have to do a revisit of our manpower, quite frankly, because we know the end state. And at the end of the quarter we're going to be revisiting. We review it daily. I'm over at the Pentagon once a week giving presentations and status. And at the end of the quarter, we're going to look at the throughput, how many checks have been paid, how many cases have we managed, exactly what, you know, Jeff's question was. You know, how long does it take, how long is it taking, are we getting better at it?

And we're going to build out the office. There's been no hint at not closing cases, or -- you know, taking the slow road.

A lot of soldiers, we can tell, are anxious when they believe that we're here to have the Army money. That is clearly not the case. It's set-aside money, (expensed ?). Congress is looking at it. They're going to monitor it. OMB is all over it.

There's no doubt in my mind that soldiers that were legitimately stop-lossed will be identified. Those that are denied the claim will be -- we'll report to Congress and they're going to hold us to, you know, task, take us to task on why didn't you?

We have the people on medical hold we have to look at. We have the judicial folks, the folks that are in, you know, the disciplinary barracks. They have separate issues. So there are set-asides. And we're looking at all of those cases.

So thanks for listening and giving me the time today, guys and gals.

MS. MUNRO: All right. Well, thank you to everyone for participating in today's roundtable, and a very special thank you to Major Whitley for being here today.

This concludes today's roundtable, and have a great day.

END.