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## **To enlisted go the spoils**

Targeted raises bypass officers, take aim at **warrants**, NCOs

By **Vince Crawley**

*Times staff write*

Midlevel and career enlisted people and warrant officers would be the big winners for pay raises in 2004 under a Pentagon plan recently sent to Congress.

The Pentagon wants to spend an extra \$185 million next year on **targeted raises** for career enlisted people and **warrant officers**. Defense officials also want to give only modest raises to the most junior enlisted people and officers, which would free up **another \$40 million for larger pay hikes** to midcareer enlisted people and **warrant officers**, who typically are recruited from the enlisted ranks.

The average proposed raise that would take effect Jan. 1 would be 4.1 percent, but raises would range from 2 percent to 6.25 percent, depending on rank, according to Pentagon documents. Average wages for all Americans rose 3.2 percent in the past year.

For the first time since targeted raises began in 2000, commissioned officers would get no more than the 3.7 percent minimum hike required by law. O-1s and O-2s would get even less, 3.2 percent. However, O-1Es and O-2Es, junior officers with prior enlisted experience, would receive 3.7 percent.

Noncommissioned and petty officers would receive raises ranging from 4.6 percent to 6.25 percent. **Warrant officers — who have complained their pay hasn't kept pace with enlisted pay hikes — would receive 5.25 percent to 6 percent increases.**

Approving the pay hikes would send a signal of support to the hundreds of thousands of service members deployed overseas, the Defense Department said in a legislative proposal sent to Congress March 3 and made public in mid-March. "Retaining talented personnel is especially important in current times as the nation wages the war on terrorism," according to the proposal, signed by William Haynes, the Pentagon's general counsel.

Midgrade enlisted members with six to 12 years of service make up the bulk of those deploying in support of the war effort and are the primary trainers of personnel, the proposal said. "Although re-enlistment rates are improving, these groups are the most profoundly short-handed."

"Our primary objective is to make military compensation competitive with private-sector income," the Pentagon's office of compensation said in a statement describing the plan.

Since 2000, military pay "has increased substantially relative to pay raises in the private sector," the statement said. Military pay has risen an average of 23.8 percent, while civilian wages have increased 16.1 percent.

The military also targeted above-average raises to specific ranks and years of service, a departure from the policy of the two decades prior to 2000, when everyone in uniform received the same percentage increase.

But pay studies in the late 1990s found entry-level military pay is far higher than typical starting wages for civilian jobs. The extra money helps lure high-quality recruits, but by 10 years of service, many enlisted people found their raises lagged behind potential private-sector pay hikes.

"It is important that we continue the targeted pay raise effort," the statement said.

In another departure from past practice, officials also want to give smaller raises to the most junior personnel to pay for even larger raises for midterm and career enlisted members and warrant officers.

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Along with giving O-1s, O-2s and E-2s a raise of 3.2 percent — equal to the average increase in civilian wages and ahead of inflation — the most junior people in uniform, E-1s, would get pay hikes of just 2 percent.

Defense officials say those people already earn more than 85 percent to 90 percent of all Americans entering the job market and point out that even a 2 percent raise outpaces the current inflation rate.

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Web Editor's Note:

Targeted pay raises are as follows:

- W-1 – 5.25% pay raise in years of service 6 through 14
- W-2 – 5.50% pay raise in years of service 8 through 16
- W-3 – 5.75% pay raise in years of service 12 through 18
- W-4 – 6.0% pay raise in years of service 16 through 26

The pay table, if approved by Congress and signed into law by the President, would look like this:

**Proposed Military Pay Table for FY 2004 Submitted to Congress by DoD**

**WARRANT OFFICERS (Army, Navy, Marine Corps only)**

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>&lt;2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>W5</b>								
<b>W4</b>	3,119.40	3,355.80	3,452.40	3,547.20	3,710.40	3,871.50	4,035.00	4,194.30
<b>W3</b>	2,848.80	2,967.90	3,089.40	3,129.30	3,257.10	3,402.20	3,598.80	3,786.30 5.75%%
<b>W2</b>	2,505.90	2,649.00	2,774.10	2,865.30	2,943.30	3,157.80 5.50%	3,321.60 5.50%	3,443.40 5.50%
<b>W1</b>	2,212.80	2,394.00	2,515.20	2,593.50	2,802.30 5.25%	2,928.30 5.25%	3,039.90 5.25%	3,164.70 5.25%
	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	
<b>W5</b>				5,360.70	5,544.30	5,728.80	5,914.20	
<b>W4</b>	4,359.00	4,617.30 6.00%	4,782.60 6.00%	4,944.30 6.00%	5,112.00 6.00%	5,277.00 6.00%	5,445.90 6.00%	
<b>W3</b>	3,988.80 5.75%%	4,140.60 5.75%%	4,291.80 5.75%%	4,356.90	4,424.10	4,570.20	4,716.30	
<b>W2</b>	3,562.20 5.50%	3,643.80 5.50%	3,712.50	3,843.00	3,972.60	4,103.70	4,103.70	
<b>W1</b>	3,247.20 5.25%	3,321.90	3,443.70	3,535.80	3,535.80	3,535.80	3,535.80	

Note: Targeted pay raises are highlighted