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Lowering Enlistment Standards to Meet Army Readiness

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The Army lowered enlistment standards to meet current recruiting goals; this will not affect our future readiness. As leaders we face the ethical decision of determining what is best for our Army. Over the decades enlistment standards have increased and decreased to meet the needs of our Army. Often times it's asked, "Are we really getting this desperate?" The real question to ask is, "Does this have a negative impact on the Army's readiness?" As long as the Army continues to maintain it's standards and level of training; the quality of our soldiers will not decline. I feel, the main ingredient is to continue focusing on individual and collective training tasks.

Today's Army faces a manpower challenge as significant as any in the history of the all-volunteer force. The United States Army Recruiting Command consistently missed its much needed accession goals. This caused an extreme shortfall in filling basic training seats at all initial entry locations, as well as leaving units unmanned and vulnerable on the battlefield. Causing Soldiers to remain in hostile areas much longer than anticipated and rotations to increase beyond projected schedules. The Army has continued to see a decrease in the number of enlistments since the early 1990s however, this did not make a great impact because for the majority of that period a drawdown existed. This gave a false sense of success and security among leaders and the ranks that were filled. At the same time we raised enlistment standards to recruit a higher quality of Soldier. Enlistment standards needed to be raised due to the improved technology of weapon systems and the intellect needed to operate them. Since raising the standards, the whole demographic make-up of the Army changed and a much more educated and morally acceptable soldier emerged.

Along with the drawdown, the United States saw an improvement in unemployment rates and economic growth. The United States Department of Labor has reported over a 30 year all-time low in unemployment into the 4 percent range. At the same time, economic growth has continued on the longest streak since the 1960s. With the growth of the economy and the need for more people in the civilian workforce, companies needed to increase wages and benefits for employees. This has made the civilian marketplace much more attractive to young people and taken a stronghold on the target market group of the Armed Forces. During the 1980s the Army became a very attractive employer for young people; providing them with salaries and benefits much more attractive than the civilian marketplace. During the Clinton and Bush administrations the country focused put on repairing the oil crisis from the 1980s and improving economic growth for the county. These plans had great success and brought the nation into a period of progression and economic improvement.

Coupled with the economic growth plan government transformed the education system. Developing a whole new strategy to ensure all children received quality educational opportunities. The school curriculums moved from a single solution system to a problem solving strategy. Teaching children to reason and make educated decisions based on principles. This increased the confidence and individuality of young people; creating young adults who focused more on their personal growth and individual needs than previous generations who focused on putting others before themselves. This did not necessarily create selfish individuals, but created much more mature and stronger leaders. When placing young people in positions of responsibility they find important; often times they excel far beyond expectations. As the education needs of children increased so did the availability of funding for post-secondary education, both public and private. The country has seen an all-time high in college attendance

rates among high school seniors and expects to have continued growth. These new financial alternatives have diluted the effectiveness of the Montgomery G.I. Bill, thus creating another dilemma for the armed forces recruiting and retention rates.

Since the Army has reached a very precarious position with its attrition and retention numbers, it forced the Army to become more lenient on enlistment standards. Some say this will cause a decline in the quality of our Army and its capabilities. The Army lowered educational standards. Allowing enlistment of individuals with ASVAB scores below 31 AFQT and alternate education credentials. The moral and physical standards have remained untouched to protect the health and welfare of the Army. The Army places individuals in MOS's where they have the aptitude ability to be trained and perform as a productive Soldier. I have seen many instances where a young person did not possess the educational credentials need to serve, but had the desire and common sense to perform exceptionally well as a Soldier. As a nation, we have spent the last 15 years preparing and developing our youth to excel. Now is the time to give all young people the opportunity to show what they are made of. As long as the person is mentally, morally, and medically qualified they can be allowed the privilege of serving their country. In closing, will the lowering of enlistment standards jeopardize the Army's readiness? I do not think this will have a negative impact on the ability of the Army to meet future readiness.