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Volunteers for Uncle Sam: Rethinking Military Recruitment

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Volunteers for Uncle Sam Rethinking Military Recruitment¹

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1800s, Carl Von Clausewitz proposed his now famous “trinity” War is not waged by an independent military, but is influenced by three elements -- the military, the government, and the will of the people. Of course, an essential component of the military are the service members, without them a military can not exist. How a society fills the ranks of its armed forces is therefore an important dimension of the military and how it wages war.

In recent years, the importance of the American soldier in military strategy and policy seems to have been ignored. Despite voluminous writings on strategy, unity of command, span of control, modernization, and leadership, there is one topic largely overlooked by the military strategists and thinkers – acquiring manpower. As a result of this lack of focus, three of the four military services, have had to face the failure of meeting their recruiting requirements. Without troops there is no military, without them war or conflicts could not be waged.

In this paper I will discuss the critical role of manpower in military strategy and will argue that three of the four services are now facing severe shortages of recruits.

¹ I am grateful to the following people who have spent much time with me discussing recruiting issues: Lt Col Lorry Fenner and COL Mark Pizzo of the National War College, Dr. Steve Sellman, Director of Accession Policy, OSD, LTG Ted Stroup (Ret.), formerly Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and currently Vice President, Association of the U.S. Army, Raul Yzaguirre, President National Council of La Raza, LTC Lenny Wong, Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis, USMA, MAJ Joe Jones, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, USMA, Ed Kearn, Deputy, Navy Recruiting Command, Pat Lerro, consultant to Navy Recruiting Command, and Dr. Richard Verdugo, National Education Association.

because of failure to pay close attention to manpower issues during the drawdown years when recruiting was relatively easy. Finally, I argue that one approach to reducing these shortfalls is for the services to focus on recruiting Latinos² into the military, and that most of the strategies used to recruit this group can prove effective in recruiting other groups as well. The approaches currently used to recruit all youth, regardless of race and gender, are in need of an overhaul and the current recruiting crisis is an opportunity to re-examine standard practices. In this paper my focus is on recruiting the enlisted force. While I discuss all the services, I concentrate most on the Army as it is the largest service, has the highest annual recruiting goals, and is the most manpower dependent.

I have organized the present paper into two main sections followed by my conclusions.

- I discuss the relationship between military strategy and manpower. A discussion on issues of neglecting of manpower, reasons for significant manpower shortfalls, and the importance of quality recruits.
- A second section focuses on recruiting Latinos as a solution to current shortfalls. I will discuss demographics, various measures of military performance, impediments to recruiting this population, and new recruiting strategies.

² The term "Hispanic" refers to people whose origins or ancestry are from Latin America or Spain. The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably throughout this paper. Hispanic is not a racial designation but an ethnicity. Hispanics may be of any race.

BACKGROUND

Military Strategy and Manpower Getting from Here to There

Our challenge, at a time when fewer people have served or have a connection with the military, is to build a strong base of support and appreciation for what soldiers do, and to challenge young people, especially, to think about their obligation to serve and not to leave that to someone else to do. Our country's not going to have the luxury of trying to quickly draft and train forces in the future. We're either going to be prepared to fight, and suffer low casualties, or we're going to be unprepared, and suffer great casualties.

Louis Caldera, Secretary of the Army³

Some military analysts argue that because Americans have an intolerance for military casualties, policymakers try to fight and win bloodless wars. Using airpower, some have tried to wage such wars. But as is becoming apparent from our experiences in Kosovo and Operation Desert Storm, ground forces are usually needed to gain a definitive victory. German General Klaus Naumann, the chief of NATO's military committee until his resignation in recent days, said "So far in military history, we have not seen an operation which was successful by using air power exclusively."⁴ While debate continues on the necessary end-strength for the military services, the need for recruits will continue as long as the services are not downsizing.

Today there are over 1,390,000 service members on active duty in the four services, and over 880,000 in the selected reserve.⁵ If the services are unable to meet their manpower requirements several things occur. 1) Standards for entry decline so that people who would not have been eligible for service previously are now accessed into the

³ Paul Richter, 'Louis Caldera: The Tough Job of Keeping Soldiers Ready for War and in the Army,' Los Angeles Times (November 22, 1998), no page number (from Early Bird).

⁴ Bradley Graham, "General Warns of Limits to Air Power," The Washington Post (April 27, 1999), p. A11.

⁵ Defense Manpower Data Center, "Distribution of Active Duty Forces by Service, Rank, Sex, and Ethnic Group," and "Distribution of Select Reservists Forces by Service, Rank, Sex, and Ethnic Group" reports # DMDC-3035EO, September 30, 1998,

military, 2) military strength declines, or 3) both enlistment standards and end-strength decline. In any of these cases, the end result does not bode well for the armed services.

Manpower: An Afterthought

Manpower and personnel issues are given short shrift in the National Security Strategy (NSS) document. The only mention of the topic is in the preface when President Clinton refers to the need for quality of life improvements recommended by the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).⁶ The NSS promises funding to “preserve” quality of life for service members. There is no mention of recruiting or retaining uniformed personnel in sufficient numbers or sufficient quality.

The 1997 National Military Strategy describes how the Department of Defense will prepare for a full range of military contingencies, from peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance to war. Amid the focus on strategy and modernization, discussion of manpower and personnel is given short shrift, though soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are seen as key to military success. “(C)ritical to the success of our strategy are the men and women who comprise our military forces. We must continue to recruit, train, and maintain a high quality force to ensure our nation’s security.”⁷ The report goes on to state the importance of the all-volunteer force. “Its people are the most important enabler of our strategy. The quality of this force is critical. Only the most dedicated, well-trained personnel with first class leaders will succeed in the complex and fast-paced environment of future military operations. While modern technology enables our forces to perform their missions more effectively, it cannot

⁶ The White House, A National Security Strategy for a New Century, October 1998, p. 111.

⁷ National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 1997. September 1997. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. p. 4.

substitute for high quality people ”⁸ Though service members are not the focus of the document, they are recognized as the foundation that enables the Armed Forces to execute the nation’s military strategy

Similarly, Joint Vision 2010 (JV 2010), another Department of Defense publication, sees maintenance of a trained and ready force as instrumental to effective warfighting in the years ahead JV 2010 “recognizes the crucial importance of our current high quality, highly trained forces ”⁹ This document rightly places servicemembers at the center of operational success “This vision draws on our most fundamental source of strength—our people People are the Armed Forces; at the end of the day, our success, in war or peace, will rest ultimately on the men and women of the Armed Forces ”¹⁰ The publication goes on to stress the importance of recruiting high quality people. “Attracting people with the intellectual tools, physical skills, and motivation to serve effectively in the military was foremost among the requirements for building a professional robust and ready force In the late 1970s, over 15 percent of our enlistees scored in the lowest category for military qualification examinations Today, less than one percent are in that category and over 90 percent of our enlistees have graduated from high school The combination of careful targeting of requirements, recruiting incentives, quality of life initiatives, and challenging opportunities has been very effective in attracting the personnel needed to sustain our quality force ”¹¹ The

⁸ Ibid , pp 27-28

⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Vision 2010, Washington, DC, 1998, p 1

¹⁰ Ibid , p 2

¹¹ Ibid , p 6

report concludes by stating that "recruiting and retaining high quality people will remain our first priority "¹²

Defense Secretary Cohen's annual report to Congress for 1998 has a chapter on personnel, with several pages devoted to recruiting for all the services ¹³ While recruiting difficulties are acknowledged and the document anticipated that challenges would continue through 1998, no remedies were suggested apart from improving military pay and benefits

Finally, the Army's posture statement also recognizes the importance of quality soldiers Indeed, "quality people" is the first of the Chief of Staff's six imperatives and "the single most important factor for maintaining readiness "¹⁴ Still, a very small percentage of the document deals with how to best recruit for the Army The report acknowledges shortfalls and the importance of maintaining quality, but again no specific remedies are provided Despite statements about a quality force, only a small percentage of these policy documents actually deal with manpower or personnel issues Yet if our greatest resource is people, it would behoove senior leaders to focus more on the problem of maintaining quality while increasing quantity in recruiting

Recruiting Shortfalls

Three of the four services will fail to meet their recruiting mission For the first time in at least 15 years, the Air Force has paid advertising on national television ¹⁵ That

¹² Ibid , p 28

¹³ William S Cohen, Annual Report to the President and Congress, 1998

¹⁴ The Honorable Louis Caldera and General Dennis J Reimer, "A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army, Fiscal Year 2000 " Presented to the Committees and Subcommittees of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, First Session, 106th Congress, February 1999, p xii

¹⁵ During the past 15 years, only public service announcements for the Air Force appeared on television

single fact is an indicator of the severity of today's recruiting crisis. Indeed, the Air Force is increasing its advertising budget from \$17 million to \$76 million. For FY 1999, the Army's goal is 74,500 new recruits, the Navy's is about 53,000 and the Air Force's goal is about 33,800. The Army failed to meet its recruiting goals in FY 1998, falling short by 800 enlistees, and anticipates a shortfall in FY 1999 of about 10,000 recruits, while the Navy and Air Force will each fall several thousand recruits short of their assigned goals.¹⁶ These recruiting shortfalls are not limited to the active-duty component. In recruiting year 1998, the Army Reserve was short 3,700 recruits, and the Army National Guard was short by 1,200 enlistees.¹⁷

There are two main reasons for these shortfalls: the strong economy (which reduces the pool of qualified and interested youth available to the military), and declining interest in military enlistment among today's youth. Because of these conditions, recruiting is becoming tougher at the same time that recruiting goals have increased. The need for increasing numbers of recruits is due to the end of the drawdown,¹⁸ combined with declines in reenlistment,¹⁹ and increases in attrition.²⁰

¹⁶ Philip Gold, "Q Should Congress Reinstate a Peacetime Draft to Fill the Ranks? No. Rethink and restructure military forces before revisiting the bad old days of the draft." Insight (April 5-12, 1999), p. 25.

¹⁷ Caldera and Reimer, op cit., p. xii.

¹⁸ Army end-strength has stayed much the same since 1996 after declining by 36% from September 1989 to September 1996.

¹⁹ LTG Walt Ulmer (USA, Ret.) cites several reasons officers are leaving the service before reaching retirement, "A healthy job market for officers who leave the service, the lack of a clear military threat to the United States, the higher expectations for a 'decent family life,' and less tolerance among capable young people for poor leadership." Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another 'Bridge Too Far?'" Parameters, 28 (Spring 1998), p. 6.

²⁰ Attrition refers to being discharged from the service before completing the initial enlistment. The bulk of attrition occurs during boot camp, and 70% of this occurs during the first three weeks.

Yet another change adding to the recruiting crunch is the increasing percentage of high school graduates who go on to college. In 1975 some 50% of graduates entered college. By 1995 this percentage had increased to 67%. This increase is, in part, a result of the growing wage disparity between high school and college graduates. College graduates, on average, earn 67% more than do high school graduates.²¹ Further, the lack of a clear military threat to the nation makes military service an even tougher sell to today's youth.

The economy exerts a huge effect on recruiting. When the economy is strong, young people who do not choose to go to college are better able to find employment. Thus, recruiters have a difficult time in finding young people who are interested in military service.

The degree to which young people are interested in military service is measured each year in a Department of Defense survey of 10,000 men and women ages 16-24, the Youth Attitude Tracking Survey (YATS). (The sample size is large enough to permit breaking out results for whites, blacks and Hispanics by gender.) Survey respondents are asked about their plans for college, jobs or military service for the next few years. Those who report they will "definitely" or "probably" join the military are referred to as "positively propensed." Recruiting officials find that this measure is highly correlated with actual enlistment decisions.²² This survey finds that in the years since Operation Desert Storm, interest in military service has been declining.

There is also some evidence that declining interest in the military is due to an increase in individualism among today's young people. Because of its conformity,

²¹ From a RAND study discussed by Pat Lerro, consultant to Navy Recruiting Command, interviewed on 30 April 1999.

rigidity and lack of personal freedom, military service is unpalatable to highly individualistic youth. In anecdotes and surveys of civilian youth, it is these aspects of the armed services that are the greatest disincentives to military service²³ and contribute to the significant recruiting difficulties the services are currently experiencing. The rise in individualism can be traced to the Baby Boom generation. Parents of Boomers desired children who could “think for themselves” (according to survey data of that time). This individualism has become more pronounced in younger generations and is fostered by a highly competitive economy which rewards individual initiative.²⁴

There is an anomaly. Given current recruiting difficulties, the Marines continue to thrive bringing in sufficient numbers of recruits of better quality. They are a far smaller service and therefore recruit significantly fewer people each year than either the Army or the Navy. As a result, they are able to confine their recruiting efforts to the positively propensed. The Army and the Navy (which must recruit 100% more and 50% more, respectively) must fill their ranks by recruiting the negatively propensed, those who say they will “probably not” or “definitely not” enlist in the military. The Marines therefore have a “niche market” and they do a superb job of mining that market. With

²² Interview with Ed Kearn, Deputy, Navy Recruiting Command, 30 April 1999.

²³ “There’s too much structure [in the military], and the strictness scares me.” “They say they want leaders, but when I look at the military, I don’t see individuals, I just see a big group.” “Uniforms and orders just aren’t my thing.” “There’s so much detail in the military, like they teach you exactly how to fold your shirts. What’s the point?” These quotes from Bradley Graham, “The Bugle Sounds, but Fewer Answer,” The Washington Post (March 13, 1999), p. A3. The Youth Attitude Tracking Survey consistently finds the “military lifestyle” to be the single most common reason for both young men and young women (ages 16-21) to report a lack of interest in military service. “Lifestyle” is a catchphrase encompassing any comments regarding the dislike for conformity, regimentation, or discipline of military life. (This information was provided by Mr. Jerry Lehnus, Defense Manpower Data Center, in a telephone conversation on 12 April 1999.)

²⁴ Cheryl Russell, “The Master Trend,” American Demographics (October 1993), pp. 30, 35.

phenomenal ads and a website that has the look and feel of a video game, their message is highly tailored to appeal to this niche. The Army and Navy, by contrast, must appeal to a broader cross-section of youth, making it less effective to adopt a specific "attitude." For example, the Marines can appeal to their recruit's desire for a challenge, but many Army recruits are not seeking a challenge and they will not enlist if they perceive the challenge to be too great. (I once remarked to an officer assigned to the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, USAREC, that movies like "Rambo" must help recruiting by sending aspiring adventurers to enlist all over the country. He replied that movies like that actually "turned off as many people as they turned on.")

Attention to recruiting has varied over the years since the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force. When it began in 1973, there was a determination to making it work by investing resources into recruiting, including significant advertising and boosting pay and benefits well above conscription levels. During the period 1976-1980 some services began to miss their recruiting goals in the face of a cap on pay, reduced benefits, and an improving labor market resulting in more jobs for young people and thus more alternatives to military service.²⁵ Hundreds of thousands of unqualified recruits were inadvertently brought into military service during this period due to miscalibrated scores on an entrance test that mistakenly showed them as eligible. Given the difficulties of this period the services intensified their focus on recruiting in the early 1980s.²⁵ Thanks in large measure to the efforts of GEN Max Thurman who led the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in the early 1980s, the All-Volunteer Force survived and the early 1980s showed marked improvements in recruiting and recruit quality. Beginning in 1988

reenlistments were increased to help the services meet end-strength and quality goals in the face of a declining population of recruiting age and a strong economy. Today's largely career force is a result of the changes that began some 11 years ago. From 1990 forward the services were downsizing. This, and the high reenlistments, meant fewer recruits were needed so the services were able to fill their ranks and increase the quality of the new enlistees. Knowing that the number of needed recruits would rise at the conclusion of the drawdown, that would have been an opportune time to re-examine the business of recruiting, but in the face of sufficient recruits of unprecedented quality, senior leaders largely ignored recruiting.

The Importance of Quality Recruits

Today, with higher recruiting goals, a strong economy and declining propensity for young people to enlist, combined with a lack of long-term planning and vision, the services are finding it difficult to meet their enlistment goals. For the first time in a decade the services are in danger of not making mission and so have begun to accept an increasing proportion of "low quality" recruits (i.e., those without high school diplomas and those scoring in the bottom half of the Armed Forces Qualification Test, AFQT).²⁶

²⁵ David R. Segal and Naomi Verdugo, "Demographic Trends and Personnel Policies as Determinants of the Racial Composition of the Volunteer Army," Armed Forces & Society, 20 (Summer 1994), pp. 620-622.

²⁶ The AFQT is a standardized test administered to applicants prior to their enlistment to determine eligibility. The test measures "trainability." The test was normed on the civilian young adult population. Those scoring in the upper half of the test (in categories I-III A) and who are high school diploma graduates, are referred to as "high quality." Those in the 31st-49th percentile, referred to as III B, are considered low quality, as are those in test score category IV, the 10th-30th percentile. Law prohibits those in the bottom 10% from enlisting. About 68% of new recruits, DoD-wide, scored in the top half of the AFQT in FY98. This percentage ranged from a high of 78% for the Air Force to a low of 64% for both the Navy and Marine Corps. Only 50% of the civilian population ages 17-22 would have scored in the top half of the test.

“High quality” recruits refer to those entering service with both a high school diploma and scores in the upper half of the distribution of AFQT scores

There are several reasons why quality is an important recruiting criteria. High quality recruits are less likely to attrite, more disciplined, and show better judgment. Sound decision-making is critical with a downsized military. The percentage of high quality new recruits peaked for all the services in 1992. In that year they comprised 85% of new Air Force recruits but this declined to 77% by FY98. For Marines high quality recruits declined from 70% to 62%. For new Navy recruits the percentage that were high quality declined from 66% to 60%. The most dramatic decline occurred in the Army where the percentage of quality recruits fell from 78% to 58% in FY98.²⁷

Each year the services must recruit about 200,000 young people for active-duty service, and an additional 150,000 for the Reserve Component.²⁸ The services all prefer high school diploma graduates (as opposed to dropouts or those with General Equivalency Diplomas, GEDs) because research shows that those with diplomas are significantly more likely to complete basic training and their service obligation. About 80% of those with high school diplomas will complete the first three years of service, while less than 50% of high school drop outs will do so. (GED holders fall inbetween).²⁹

The services seek to minimize the attrition that results when recruits fail to complete their enlistment. Currently about one-third of first-term recruits in the

²⁷ Unpublished statistics from OSD. Accession Policy

²⁸ William S. Cohen, Annual Report to the President and the Congress. Washington, DC: U S Government Printing Office, 1998. p. 87

²⁹ Ibid, p. 87

Department of Defense are discharged before their enlistment is completed³⁰ Of this attrition, most occurs during the first year of service, and the bulk of it during basic combat training When a trainee attrites during or after basic training, the services lose the significant advertising and recruiting costs incurred, as well as training costs In fiscal year (FY) 1998 advertising and recruiting costs amounted to \$11,187 per recruit for the Army, \$7,271 per recruit for the Navy, \$5,590 per capita for the Marines, and \$4,161 per capita for the Air Force³¹ Training costs boost the total service investment to about \$35,000³² With costs like these, the services are reluctant to compromise on requirements that 90-95% of all recruits have a high school diploma But there are also other reasons to maintain quality standards

Another consequence of declining standards (i.e., more recruits who are high school drop outs and more with scores in the bottom half of the distribution) is greater misbehavior, such as drug problems, absence without leave (AWOL), and increases in courts-martial Data show a clear relationship between indiscipline and recruit quality – as recruits with both high school diplomas and high test scores increase, indiscipline declines³³

Decision-making is also affected by quality The effects of low quality standards are devastating during combat The ground-breaking studies of Samuel Stouffer, a social scientist in the War Department shed light on the importance of quality during combat In his multi-volume study The American Soldier, Stouffer observes “Assigning a stupid

³⁰ Andrea Stone, “White Female Enlistees Leaving the Army at an Alarming Rate ” Army Times (April 5, 1999), p. 14 Stone cites data provided to USA Today by Northwestern University military sociologist Charles Moskos

³¹ Mark Pizzo, op cit, p. 26

³² Stone, op cit

³³ Unpublished data from the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel

man to the infantry is tantamount to condemning him to death ” As noted in a recent article by COL Mark Pizzo, Stouffer’s “analysis concluded that men in the lowest intelligence bracket [Category V, the bottom 10% on the Armed Force Qualification Test] doing exactly the same rifle-squad work as those in the top bracket [Category I, top 10%] were wounded six times as often Studies of casualty rates in Korea and Vietnam demonstrated similar results ”³⁴ Given the current shortfalls in military manpower, units are less than fully staffed, ships have empty bunks, and those on duty are required to do more and work longer hours to get the work done This can lead to declines in morale and reenlistment, which results in the need to attract greater numbers of recruits This is a costly spiral, in terms of dollars (as more of the services’ operating dollars must be diverted to recruiting), and lives (compromised warfighting effectiveness)

There is much debate about how best to improve the quantity of recruits while maintaining quality Suggestions run the gamut from initiating a draft,³⁵ to offering shorter enlistments of 15 to 18 months³⁶ Another approach is to attract underrepresented groups to the Armed Forces Women are the largest demographic group that is significantly underrepresented in the military The representation of women in the service has consistently increased since the start of the AVF and is an issue often discussed by manpower planners But another underrepresented group is Hispanics and about this group there is relatively little discussion

³⁴ Mark Pizzo. ‘Q Should Congress Reinstate a Peacetime Draft to Fill the Ranks? Yes Both national security and the nation’s civil society would benefit from such a move ’ Insight (April 5-12, 1999), p 26

³⁵ Ibid

TARGETING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS NEW STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT LATINOS

Latinos and the Military

When duty called, Macario Garcia left Sugarland, Texas, a farm town just south of Houston where Latinos and blacks worked the fields and whites owned the land. An Army staff sergeant, he won a Congressional Medal of Honor. Returning home after White House ceremonies, he was refused service at a diner that did not feed Mexicans or blacks. Before the war, such an affront would have been swallowed. But Garcia became a cause. In the barrios, people named their children after him, though they did not take to the streets. Now there are streets named after him.

Roberto Suro³⁷

Military service is often seen as a stepping stone from disadvantaged circumstances to the middle class. Raul Yzaguirre, President of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic advocacy group, said "It is especially troubling to me as an Air Force veteran that Hispanic young people are being deprived of one of the traditional avenues of upward mobility – in terms of enhanced educational opportunities and top-notch job skill development – in this society."³⁸ Mr. Yzaguirre believes military entrance standards prevent many Latinos from enlisting. Military service is also seen as a means of demonstrably earning the rights and privileges that accrue to American citizens. African Americans have long realized military service as a means of both economic advancement and a way to earn the rights and privileges of citizenship that were long denied them. The NAACP has long had a liaison to the military services. African American history is replete with examples of blacks facing danger in battle only to return

³⁶ William Matthews, "Officials Asked to Consider Shorter Enlistment," Army Times (April 5, 1999), p. 8 quotes Rudy de Leon, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and Professor Charles Moskos on shorter enlistments.

³⁷ Roberto Suro, Strangers Among Us: How Latino Immigration is Transforming America, New York: Knopf, 1998, p. 79.

³⁸ Norman Heitzman, "Hispanic Severely Underrepresented in Military: Underrepresentation is Impeding Educational, Economic Opportunities of Young Latinos," Agenda, 14 (Spring 1999), p. 19.

home to discrimination. The stark discrimination faced by black veterans upon their return to the U.S. after the hardships of military service spurred many blacks to work for civil rights upon their return. The history of Latinos in this country also includes such stories, like that of Macario Garcia (above). Another experience that occurred during World War II concerned the burial of a Hispanic soldier killed in Europe. His body was shipped for burial to his hometown in Texas. The funeral home there refused to bury him, saying their cemetery was for whites only. His body was ultimately laid to rest in a veteran's cemetery, but the outrage over this event led to the founding several years later of American GI Forum, a Latino civil rights group.

Military service seems to endow veterans with the confidence necessary to lobby for their rights and confers upon them the knowledge that having equally sacrificed for their country as did whites, they were owed the benefits of citizenship. In this manner, military service provides a way for disadvantaged groups to demonstrate their equality and their worthiness as citizens.

While Hispanics have a long and honorable history of military service, including 37 Medal of Honor winners among them, today they are underrepresented in every service. Though unintended, this denies the military services, now struggling to make their recruiting goals, their contributions, and it denies Latinos a time-honored path to upward mobility as well as the opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism to those who would question their right to full citizenship.

There are other very practical reasons that the services should focus attention on Hispanic recruiting. They comprise a large and growing segment of the population with a high propensity to serve in the military. (Though this high propensity has yet to yield

high numbers of recruits) Today the Army is the service of choice for blacks If one service becomes the common choice for Latinos, and if that service can increase the percentage of its recruits who are Hispanics, then they will have gone a long way to solving their recruiting problems

The reason Latinos can make an important difference to the recruiting fortunes of a specific service is explained by their demographics Though Hispanics constitute 13.6% of the population ages 17-21 (and an even higher percentage if Puerto Rico is included), they comprise just 8% of enlisted members DoD-wide (7.6% in the Army, 9.0% in the Navy, 12.3% in the Marines, and 5.1% in the Air Force)³⁹

Hispanics are a fast-growing population Latinos in the U.S. currently number about 30 million Their numbers will grow to 100 million by 2050 when they are projected to constitute 25% of the U.S. population In California, Latinos comprise 40% of school-age children and it is anticipated that they will comprise a majority of the public school students by 2006⁴⁰ Higher birth rates and immigration are the factors which account for Hispanic population growth Hispanics ages 17-19 will surpass African Americans of the same ages to become the largest minority group in 2000 If Puerto Rico is included, Hispanics ages 17-19 already outnumber blacks of the same age group and have since 1996⁴¹ Hispanics are a young population is young, with a median age of 26 years compared to 36 for non-Hispanics This profile suggests that effectively

³⁹ Data are Defense Manpower Data Center report #DMDC-3035EO as of September 30, 1998, op cit

⁴⁰ These data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census website and from Jorge del Pinal and Audrey Singer, "Generations of Diversity: Latinos in the United States," Population Bulletin 52, Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, October 1997

⁴¹ Though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, as a territory its population is not included with those of the United States Unless stated otherwise, data presented on Hispanics in the U.S. will not include Puerto Rico

reaching out to Latino families could well result in more than one recruit from a single family

Hispanics are geographically concentrated with three-quarters of the population residing in just five states⁴² Though Latinos live in every state, efforts to recruit Hispanics can be concentrated in areas where they are more numerous

Latinos are a diverse group encompassing Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and others from Central and South America Not all these groups are underrepresented in the military Insular Puerto Ricans (those residing on the island) are heavily represented in the Army, owing to their generations-long tradition of military service combined with persistently high unemployment⁴³ Puerto Ricans living in the states comprise 11% of the Latino population and are largely concentrated in New York and New Jersey Cubans comprise 4% of the Latino population and are concentrated in Florida The initial wave of Cuban immigrants fled when Castro took power They were from the professional classes and have attained economic success here Their grandchildren and great-grandchildren are unlikely to volunteer for the military “Other” Hispanics, those from Central and South America and the Caribbean, comprise 22% of the Latino population “Other” Hispanics are a growing segment and tend to be recent immigrants The largest of the Hispanic groups is Mexicans Mexicans, both immigrants and native-born persons, comprise 63% of the Latino population They are concentrated largely in the Southwest and, to a lesser extent, the Midwest It is Mexicans who are most underrepresented in the

⁴² According to the U S Bureau of the Census as of September 1998, these states were California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois

⁴³ Unemployment rates for 1998 averaged 13.3% for Puerto Rico compared to 6.6% for West Virginia (the state with the highest unemployment rate) Unpublished data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

military Mexicans, followed by “other” Hispanics, are the most rapidly growing segments of the Latino population ⁴⁴

Hispanics express a greater interest in military service than other groups. If we compare young men ages 16-21 by race-ethnicity, in 1998, we find that 20% of the whites, 30% of the blacks and 44% of the Hispanics express an interest in the military. Similarly, among women of the same age, 7% of whites, 23% of black and 26% of Hispanics express an interest in military service ⁴⁵. While the stereotype is that Hispanic females are traditional, their expressed interest in military service belies this perception ⁴⁶. Despite their professed interest in the military, Latinas comprise a relatively small percentage of military women DoD-wide, 7.6% as compared to 51.5% for white women and 31.5% for black women.

Among both male and female Hispanics, their high propensity is not being translated into enlistments. The preferred service is the Air Force for both young male and female Latinos. This is followed by the Marine Corps, then Army and Navy for males. Among young females, preference for the Air Force is closely followed by Army, then Marines and Navy. Interestingly, while Navy is the least preferred service of Hispanics, it is the Marines followed by Navy who are most effective recruiting them. This has been a distinct focus of Navy Recruiting Command for 10 years now and it is paying off.

⁴⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census data as of March 1997 via Census website.

⁴⁵ Defense Manpower Data Center, “Trends in Propensity to Serve on Active Duty,” unpublished data released by OSD 5 January 1999.

⁴⁶ Denise Segura, “Walking on Eggshells: Chicanas in the Labor Force” in Hispanics in the Workplace, ed. By S. Knouse, P. Rosenfeld, and A. L. Culbertson. New York: Sage, 1992, p. 177. Segura recognizes a continuum of acculturation among Latinos, with recent immigrant women at the most traditional extreme, while second and third generation Hispanic women are likely to behave similar to non-Hispanic women.

Yet once in the military, both male and female Hispanics appear to do well. Latinos are less likely than other groups to be discharged during their first tour. Using data from 1994, one-third of black men, black women, and white men and 43% of white women don't complete their first term. Among Hispanics 31% of the women and 26% of the men are discharged during their first tour⁴⁷

Impediments to Recruiting Latinos

The vast majority (88%) of Hispanic teens speak English with 56% reporting that English is their preferred language, and about 50% saying that they speak English well. Only 12% of Hispanic teens speak only Spanish. But even if a teen does not speak Spanish, his or her parents often rely upon Spanish language media. This suggests the services should continue to run television advertisements in Spanish to reach Latino parents. (Currently, the Army, the Air Force and the Navy do this.) It should also be recognized that some Latinos who speak English well do not have adequate writing ability, which hampers their performance on standardized tests such as those the services administer to applicants (the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, ASVAB). Further, the services may want to consider providing intensified English language training to those recruits who need it before they report for basic training (i.e., during that period that they are in the Delayed Entry Program). Additionally, recruits who need further training in English could attend the language school at Lackland Air Force Base before going to basic training. This would help recruits with limited English perform better once in the military, and if the ASVAB were re-administered following this training, these recruits would find that with their now higher test scores a broader array of military occupations would now be open to them. Puerto Ricans from the island whose

⁴⁷ Stone op cit p 14

English language skills are, understandably, the weakest could benefit from language training. It would also enhance the satisfaction and retention of these recruits as they would then be placed in occupations that more closely reflect their abilities.

The importance of educating both Hispanic parents and young people about the military services cannot be underestimated. There are two reasons why Hispanic teens know very little about the military. First, about half the parents of Latino teens are immigrants to this country. Their knowledge of the military is limited and they may have very negative views of the military based on the poor reputation of the military in their countries of origin. Second, since the all-volunteer force began in 1973, Hispanics have been underrepresented among the military. Among males age 20 and above, only 12% of Hispanics have been in the military as compared to 31% of whites and 25% of African Americans. Latino teens are less likely to know someone who has served in the military. Having a parent who has served in the military is a significant determinant of enlistment. Half of the Army's enlisted members and three-quarters of all officers have a parent or sibling who has served in the military.⁴⁸ African American and white youths are more likely to know what the military has to offer than do Latinos. Clearly there is a need to focus on Hispanic youth and inform them about the military and what it offers them in greater detail. Further, when recruiters make contact with Latino youth they need to be aware of this information gap and work quickly to address it. While Puerto Rican young people will tend to know what the military has to offer (due to their tradition of military service), Mexican American and other Latinos, both teens and parents, will require more information.

⁴⁸ U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), New Recruit Surveys.

Lack of knowledge about the military and limited English language skills are two impediments to recruiting Hispanics for the military. But by far the main limitation is the high percentage of high school drop outs among Latinos. The services' goal is that a minimum of 90% of their recruits have a high school diploma. With a dropout rate of 29%, as compared to 13% for blacks and 8% for whites,⁴⁹ a great many Hispanic youth are not eligible for military service. However, because Latinos tend to score better on the military entrance exams than do blacks, a greater percentage of Hispanics are qualified for the military, despite their high dropout rate, than blacks.⁵⁰ Also, there are indications that the dropout rate for Hispanics has declined since 1980. Given the high proportion of African Americans in the military services, particularly the Army, despite high percentages who are ineligible, it is certainly possible to increase the representation of Latinos among military recruits. Still, the services need to become more involved in stay-in-school programs, and they need to do this as early as elementary and middle school since many Latinos drop out as early as 8th and 9th grades.

Another approach is for the services to emphasize recruiting from the junior colleges. Though the services access a very limited percentage of high school drop outs, anyone who completes at least two semesters of junior college is treated as a high school graduate for recruiting purposes and junior colleges usually do not require high school diplomas. Further, 90% of Latinos who go on to college go to 2-year colleges. The vast majority of these students do not go on to a 4-year institution citing lack of funds as the main reason. The junior colleges then are a source of Tier 1 (high school graduate)

⁴⁹ del Pinal and Singer, *op cit*, p. 34

⁵⁰ Richard L. Fernandez, "Social Representation in the Military: A Reassessment," in Professionals on the Front Line: Two Decades of the All-Volunteer Force (Friedland, Gilroy, Little and Sellman (Eds.)) Washington: Brassey's, 1996, p. 238

recruits and they are a group that may be motivated to enter military service for the educational benefits it provides

New Strategies

“Hispanics are the hottest stock in the American consumer stock market. They are growing very fast, while many other market segments are declining in size and buying power.”

Richard Tobin, President, Strategy Research Corp.⁵¹

The services should develop new strategies for recruiting underrepresented groups, such as Latinos. These include earlier suggestions such as advertising in Spanish, to include radio (a heavily used medium in the Latino community), providing language training to new recruits before they enter basic training, working intensively with the schools to reduce the dropout rates (via educational materials and mentoring as early as elementary and middle school levels), and developing specific recruiting initiatives for students enrolled in 2-year colleges. Further research needs to be done on the specifics of recruiting junior college students, as they are a neglected part of the applicant pool.

There is also a need to diversify the officer corps to provide mentors and role models for minority service members. The two-year college is a logical place to inform students about ROTC and ROTC scholarships. Further, the service academies' prep schools should provide more slots for promising Hispanic students. Similarly, the academies themselves should, in the admissions process, consider that heavily minority schools often do not offer Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Taking such classes provides students a distinct advantage in the college admissions process (by boosting grade point averages and demonstrating initiative). Therefore the admissions process should consider the limited opportunity available to certain students to take AP classes.

Hispanic teens and their parents know little about the benefits of military service. The services must make a concerted effort to educate them. This would include trips to military bases and facilities for promising teens, their parents and other influencers (e.g., teachers, guidance counselors, clergy and other “centers of influence”). School teachers and counselors are critical due to the number of students they influence and their own frequent antipathy to military service.

Recruiters need to find ways to better reach Hispanic students who are less likely than others to have telephones (only 81% have a telephone at home, compared to 93% of non-Hispanics)⁵² and are less likely to participate in after-school activities (such as sports) because they work more hours at outside jobs while enrolled in school than do other students. Recruiters need to find innovative ways to reach this group and they need to include the entire family. Latino market research shows that Hispanic parents, particularly mothers, are critical influencers of their children, much more so than the parents of white or black teens.⁵³

Another approach is for the services to sponsor community events and be an active presence in the local area. Latino parents often come from countries where the military is to be feared and avoided. Establishing a friendly and helpful presence in the local community helps to assuage these fears. Particularly effective could be links with advocacy groups of Hispanic veterans (e.g., American GI Forum). Here too, testimonials from neighborhood youth currently in the military would help to allay concerns about danger and treatment in the service. Re-invigorating programs like the Army’s

⁵¹ Oscar Suris, “Companies Target Hispanic Market,” The Washington Post (August 13 1989), p. H3.

⁵² U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1997 data from Census website.

Hometown Recruiter could make what is now a lackluster initiative into an effective effort

Like any sales, recruiting is all about identifying the needs of your customer and showing how your product meets those needs. The services provide many benefits that meet the needs of Latinos, and this information needs to be conveyed. One such need concerns health insurance. Hispanics disproportionately lack health insurance. Thirty-seven percent of Hispanics with full-time jobs do not have health insurance.⁵⁴ Half of the Latino children of immigrants have no health insurance. The services' provision of health insurance, and the ability to extend this coverage to spouses and children should be advertised to Latino youth, parents and influencers. Consider allowing service members without dependents to extend such coverage to their parents. Education benefits and a three-year citizenship process for legal immigrants (as opposed to five years without military service), are existing benefits about which little is known.

Spanish-speaking recruiters can be valuable in reaching out to parents who may not speak English. While Latino recruiters are likely in short supply, veterans (especially members of groups like American GI Forum) and reservists can prove helpful in reaching these families. Establishing the service's presence in the community demonstrates commitment and helps develop loyalty for your service among the residents. Much of this work would fall to the local recruiting station commander, though liaisons with national Latino organizations can be pursued at the headquarters level. While Hispanic station commanders may feel more comfortable doing this type of work, it simply isn't

⁵³ M. Isabel Valdes and Marta H. Seoane, Hispanic Market Handbook. New York: Gale Research, 1995.

⁵⁴ Marc Kaufman, "Hispanics Less Likely to have Health Insurance." The Washington Post (March 2, 1999), "Health" section, p. 5.

possible at most stations. It would be useful to have a community liaison in every region, someone who is knowledgeable and connected to the regional and local Latino communities

The military services are values-based organizations and this can be attractive to Latinos who tend to have conservative social values. A UCLA study examined Hispanics in California and found that though they often live in poverty, they have “a strong belief in marriage and family, a vigorous work ethic, and a desire for education. The urban-underclass model often used when minority groups are discussed – little interest in working, high welfare dependency, disintegrated families, and alienation from society – does not apply to most Latinos.”⁵⁵

Hispanic culture reveres duty, loyalty and strong bonds of honor.⁵⁶ These characteristics fit well with military culture and may explain the lower attrition rates for Hispanics in the Army as compared to whites and blacks. Latinos should be particularly interested in the prospects for advancement in the military as Hispanics employed in the civilian sector tend to work in low wage jobs with few benefits and limited advancement.⁵⁷ Of course, while the strategies noted in this section should be especially appealing to Latinos, in fairness, any initiatives adopted must be extended to all groups

⁵⁵ Results from the study “No Longer a Minority: Latinos and Social Policy in California” by the Chicano Studies Research Center, UCLA, were reported in Olivia Cervantes, “Challenging the Conventional View,” UCLA Magazine (Fall 1992), p. 13.

⁵⁶ Stephen B. Knouse, Paul Rosenfeld, and Amy L. Culbertson, “Hispanics and Work: An Overview” in Hispanics in the Workplace op cit, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Segura op cit, p. 176.

CONCLUSION GENERALIZING STRATEGIES TO ALL GROUPS

Though the All-Volunteer Force was launched in 1973, we have yet to discard the conscription mentality. Given the strong economy, high attrition rates and declining reenlistments, youth have many options in addition to military service. We need to review not just how to better recruit soldiers, but how to make military service more satisfying to service members so they will stay for a career.

We can rail against the individualistic motivations of today's youth all we wish, but that doesn't change their nature. We need to find ways to make military service a path to achievement, instead of a detour. Helping recruits attain their education and vocational goals will help return the military to its place as a provider of jobs skills, a career path, and a step on the way to attaining one's career goals. Effective recruiting should be applied across the board to all segments of the recruiting market. What we learn about recruiting Hispanics should be applied to other young people.

The services should seriously explore how to help enlisted members earn college degrees while in the service. With distance learning technology the services could offer college programs and identical courses at every military facility. Frequent moves should not prevent the acquisition of associates and even bachelors' degrees. Reenlistment could be enhanced by allowing service members time to take classes leading towards a degree or certificate.⁵⁸ Some DoD agencies provide their staff, including service members, the opportunity to work from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day for those attending classes there from 3-6 p.m. Improving vocational training while in the service, perhaps tying military commitments to some programs, could prove an effective way of keeping

skilled service members and enhancing the military as a path to job skills. For example, providing certifications for computer network administrators could be tied to an enlistment or reenlistment of a specific length. Most people want training and skill building. The services need to find ways to provide that for all enlisted members.

Efforts must be made to heighten the visibility of the military in local communities. Developing alliances with community-based organizations, will help foster an awareness in youth and their influencers of what the military services have to offer, and an understanding of the entrance requirements so they maintain their eligibility.⁵⁹ Actions such as these will be increasingly necessary to educate non-Hispanics as well. As bases are closed, the services drawdown, and the percentage of veterans in the population declines, youth will be unlikely to know much about the military or have contact with service members. The services will have to work harder to inform all youth about military service.

To become more effective at recruiting qualified applicants, we must eliminate the impediments to enlistment. For example, if an applicant has sufficiently high SAT scores, forego the AFQT, a three-hour test. This should extend to officer accessioning too, where those with high grade point averages and SAT scores are offered on-the-spot ROTC scholarships.

We must work to reduce the attrition that occurs before and during basic training by preparing recruits to meet the challenge. Recruiters have little time to manage their Delayed Entry Program (DEP, those who have signed an enlistment contract but have not

⁵⁸ A RAND study found that among enlisted members the more educational classes taken, the higher their retention and the faster their promotions, according to Pat Lerro, interviewed 30 April 1999.

yet reported for basic training) There should be a designated DEP manager in each area who meets with every person assigned to the DEP on a weekly basis This would help to reduce “buyer’s remorse,” and could also be used to get recruits in shape for basic training, providing computer-based training to those who need to improve their English, and acquaint recruits with military culture, customs and protocol To further reduce the high attrition from boot camp, while moving away from the conscription mentality toward the volunteer mentality, boot camp needn’t be softer, just more rational Allowing recruits sufficient sleep (not waking them up at 3 a m after a late arrival the night before) and permitting them telephone calls, particularly to their recruiter, might help to keep more people in basic training The days of easy recruiting are over and we need to do what we can to keep new recruits in the service and help them make it through basic training

As the percentage of high school graduates going to college has increased, we must learn to recruit students at junior colleges Providing training in specific high-tech skills (e g , LAN administrator) with each reenlistment, we’ll improve morale and create a more versatile work force Despite training recruits in marketable skills, we may even find that they stay in the military if we can continue to provide training and a satisfying work environment At the same time we must be careful not to make the GI Bill too rich or we risk losing recruits as they leave the service to use their benefits Let’s help enlisted members to acquire education while they’re in the service

The value of military service to citizens is more than just as a pathway to upward mobility and skill training Young people, even if they do not make a career of the

⁵⁹ Paul Rosenfeld and Amy L Culbertson, “Hispanics in the Military” in Knouse, Rosenfeld and Culbertson op cit , p 217

military, are returned to society as better citizens who understand the value of service to the nation. They become influencers of their own children who are then more likely to consider military service in their own futures. We must be innovative to continue to recruit high quality young people. Quality recruits are force multipliers.

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