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WRESTLING WITH RECRUITING

BY

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This paper examines current measures and recruiting strategies employed by the U.S. Army to attract qualified recruits and questions whether the current methodologies are sufficient for long-term recruiting. The paper uses a short historical look at recruiting to frame the discussion, describes the current recruiting environment challenges and current programs, and concludes with a recommendation for a new strategy to directly combat the underlying causes impacting low qualification numbers.

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ABSTRACT

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WRESTLING WITH RECRUITING

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew"[1]

—Abraham Lincoln, Message to Congress,
1 December 1862

Today's Soldiers have been compared to Soldiers from World War Two and have been called the "Strongest Generation."[2] They face a resilient and adaptive enemy, meet the challenges of multiple deployments with their associated risks and personal sacrifices, and exceed all expectations. Nonetheless, today's all-volunteer force is drawn from a diminishing pool of eligible recruits, located predominantly in isolated geographic regions. Current statistics show that only 30 percent of youths between the ages of 17 and 24 are qualified for enlistment.[3] To meet its annual recruiting goals, the U.S. Army broadened its recruiting standards to include more Category IV recruits, increased its enlistment bonuses, offered new educational and vocational incentives, raised its maximum age of enlistment to 42 years old and began waving weight restrictions. These "end-result" recruiting measures are demonstrably effective in raising the total number of recruits, as evidenced by the U.S. Army exceeding its recruiting goals in 2008,[4] but it is unclear whether these new recruiting standards will have a positive or negative long-term effect on the total force in terms of morale, discipline, professionalism and financial cost.

In an era of persistent conflict, Soldiers continue to face a volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous threat on a continually morphing battlefield. In this dynamic and evolving environment, young Soldiers interact with diverse populations, comprising competing religious, ethnic, and societal values different than those derived from our

western culture and philosophies. On tomorrow's battlefield, today's recruits will face an ever-evolving series of complex conditions once faced only by more senior and experienced Soldiers. Today's conflict requires our youngest leaders to have the inherent capacity to apply the operational art of war to the complexity and confusion of the modern battlefield. The need for sustained recruitment and increased enlistment of qualified recruits is clear. The strategic implications of an undersized or unqualified Army are unmistakable and potentially catastrophic to the nation's security environment. To successfully complete its mission -- to fight and win the nation's ground war, project land-based power, and safeguard the American public from external threat -- the U.S. Army must continually evaluate and assess its recruiting strategy to ensure that all feasible, suitable and acceptable recruiting methods are identified and initiated wherever possible. The strategic dilemma is obvious. Without a sufficient number of Soldiers, the nation is at risk. The strategic question becomes, in the absence of a national draft, how can the U.S. Army effectively increase the depth of its current recruiting pool in already well defined recruiting areas while also widening its recruiting boundaries? In essence what additional methods or programs are available to the U.S. Army that can support its continual attainment of personnel end strength goals?

This paper will consider the current recruiting environment and will examine whether the current methodologies are sufficient for long-term recruiting from a diminishing pool of eligible candidates. The paper will frame the discussion with a short review of the transition from a draft Army to the all-volunteer Army, examine the new initiatives for recruiting from a diminishing pool of eligible candidates, and conclude with a recommendation for expanding the eligible pool of recruits.

<u>Historical View</u>

Some examination of the historical framework is essential to understand today's recruiting environment. Today's Soldier arguably represents the most professional fighting force ever assembled. However, just a short 35 years ago the American public held the Army in low esteem.[5] Historically, the United States instituted its first draft, or conscription, during the Civil War, and quickly suspended the practice after hostilities ended.[6] Congress re-established the draft in 1940[7] in order to fill the Army's ranks during the nation's major 20th century conflicts, World Wars One and Two, Korea, and Vietnam. The draft also kept the Army viable during the first half of the Cold War.

The modern draft ended in 1973, after becoming politically unpopular with the majority of Americans during the Vietnam War. Not only did the draft Army suffer from well-publicized discipline problems, ranging from drug use to war crimes, it was racially and socially inequitable in its composition. In 1962, the Selective Service became "a draft agency that did more deferring than drafting." [8] Only 76,000 men were drafted, but by comparison, more than 430,000 draft eligible men were given educational or occupational deferments that year, and over 1.3 million men were deferred because of paternity.[9] In the fall of 1962, President Kennedy extended deferments to married men, even ones without children. In practice, any young man who sought deferment could either enter college or get married. Those men who lacked the required financial resources, social or family connections, academic standings, or desire to marry were draft eligible. This self-imposed draining of the draft pool was the driving force behind a less diverse, less educated and less privileged force representing our nation at war.

In a 1968 campaign speech, Republican presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon announced that if elected he would move the country to an all-volunteer force. He said,

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"Any draft that arbitrarily selects some and not others simply cannot be squared with our whole concept of liberty, justice and equality under the law. . . . in the long run, the only way to stop the inequities is to stop using the system."[10] Dissenters argued that the draft was a social contract between the citizen and the state, and that any state that would abolish conscription could no longer be called a free and democratic society. They argued that an all-volunteer force would no longer represent a cross section of the American public, eventually pulling the American public and American Army apart.[11] Dissenters feared that only men without options would enter the Army and, therefore, that the Army was destined to be an Army of have-nots. Those dire predictions did not materialize, but indications have emerged. Since 2003, the Army is becoming less representative of American society in the aggregate.

Current Recruiting Environment

Today's Army is the most qualified Army the United States or any other country has assembled. Dr. David S. Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, called the fact that the Army can fill the ranks of the volunteer force a testament to young peoples' desire to serve. "I think it's an antidote to those who question the willingness of young Americans to put someone else before themselves, to put some larger cause first," he said. "It's an antidote to that skepticism about youth and its values to see these numbers and to see their performance in the field." [12] Despite Chu's optimistic outlook, however, the current recruiting climate is possibly the most challenging since the implementation of the all-volunteer force in 1973. General Peter Chiarelli, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, in a speech to a room full of recruiters

said, "What you do for our country is simply incredible. It is fundamentally the most challenging mission we have as an Army on the home front."[13]

Multiple social, economic, and political factors join together to cause this new harsh recruiting reality.   Five factors have a negative effect on the current recruiting environment: the on-going wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, declining youth education levels, gang affiliation and crime, weight and health issues and the emergence of the Red State Army.

The requirement to grow the force by over 65,000 recruits over the course of 5 years has further burdened the recruiter. The Army's growth comes primarily from recruiting and secondarily from retention. Army recruiters, already struggling to meet current recruiting goals, must find attractive new offers for potential candidates or modify their current recruiting standards. The first step in ensuring the Army continues to meet its recruiting goals is to recognize not only the current recruiting challenges, but the future recruiting landscape as well. Major General Thomas Bostick, Commander of U.S. Army Recruiting Command testified to a congressional committee in January 2008 that, "Less than three out of 10 of our nation's youth are fully qualified for service in the Army due to disqualifying medical conditions, criminal records, lack of education credentials or low aptitude-test scores."[14]

The Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

Today's foremost recruiting challenge is unquestionably the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.   The U.S. Army has now been at war for over seven years and the American public is showing signs of war fatigue, giving rise to a popular expression, "The Army is at War, America is at the mall." Support for the war in Iraq has gone from

marginal - to slim - to a steady 65% opposed for the last two years.[15] Before the surge in

Iraq, the daily U.S. body count continued to rise at an alarming rate and many

Americans believed the war was not winnable, or if it were winnable, the cost in terms of

blood and treasure was not worth the effort.[16] America's youth are also largely against

the war. In a nationwide poll, when asked if the Global War on Terror has made them

less likely or more likely to join the military 68 percent responded less likely.[17]

Although the Army met or exceeded its recruiting goals in 2008, it was forced to

broaden its eligibility standards to allow more borderline and Category IV (CAT IV)

candidates. A CAT IV recruit is defined as a recruit who scores in the 10th to 30th

percentile on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery of tests.[18] In response to

the tightening recruiting trends, on Sept. 20, 2005, the Defense Department (DoD)

released DoD Instruction 1145.01, which allows 4 percent of each year's recruits to be

Category IV applicants—up from the 2 percent limit in place since the mid-1980s. In

October of 2008, the Army had such difficulty meeting its personnel requirements the

floodgates were opened; 12 percent of that month's active-duty recruits were Category

IV.[19] At a November 15, 2007 congressional hearing Senator Carl Levin, a Michigan

Democrat and influential chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee,

expressed his concern that the Army is sacrificing quality for quantity: "While quantity is

of course important, quality must remain the highest priority."[20] He added, "The Army

must continue to uphold high standards - moral, intellectual, and physical - for new

recruits, to ensure that these young men and women are capable of handling the great

demands that they will face …. We must find a way to both increase the size of the

Army and to maintain its standards."[21] John D. Hutson, a retired rear admiral, dean of

the Franklin Pierce Law Center, and former judge advocate general of the Navy wrote, "The across-the-board lowering of the standards is buying problems in the future."[22] He continued, "You are going to have more people getting in trouble, more people washing out" of the service before finishing their tour of duty.[23] An increase in less qualified recruits equates to a higher percentage of recruits that drop out well before the end of the first term of enlistment, leading to further increases in spending on recruitment and training, including enlistment bonuses and pay for additional recruiters.[24]

Declining Education Levels

A 2005 Rand Corporation study commissioned by the Office of the Secretary of Defense research, overwhelming showed that individual and unit proficiency suffered when CAT IV Soldiers were introduced into the unit. The Army's established goal of maintaining a recruiting standard of 90 percent high school graduation is becoming significantly harder to achieve as American youth are becoming less inclined to finish High School or earn a General Equivalency Degree (GED). In June 2006, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that nationally only 70 percent of teenagers entering high school would graduate.[25] This downward trend is disconcerting for recruiters but it is not a new phenomenon as the national high school graduation rate has declined since 1979. In 17 of the nation's 50 largest cities, the high school graduation rate is below 50%, with the lowest graduation rates reported in Detroit (24.9%), Indianapolis (30.5%), and Cleveland (34.1%).[26] These statistics become even more discouraging when studied by gender and race. Nationally the Caucasian graduation rate stands at 76% while Hispanics and African-American graduation rates are merely 57% and 53% respectively. Females graduate at a higher rate than males in every racial category but

the difference is widest in African-American males who graduate a full 11 percentage points below their female counterparts.[27] Department of Defense data corresponds with these findings; only 71 % of Army recruits in 2007 earned their high-school diploma, extending a downward trend beginning in 2004, the first full year of Operation Iraqi Freedom Iraq.[28] Even with a lower percentage of high school graduates, the Army has a higher percentage of high school graduates than the general U.S. populace.[29] The question for the Army is, then, what is a better indicator of performance: a high score on the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery Test or a High School Diploma? According to a National Priorities Project that cites Department of Defense data covering more than 40 years of studies, around 80% of recruits with regular high school diplomas will finish their first term of enlistment. Up to half of those with a GED, other alternative equivalency credential, or no credential will drop out during the first term of enlistment. Having a regular high school diploma is the single best predictor of successful first term enlistment.[30]

Gang Affiliation - Crime

In 2004, the Pentagon published a "Moral Waiver Study," with the seemingly benign goal of better defining "relationships between pre-Service behaviors and subsequent Service success."[31] In practice, it meant opening more recruitment doors to potential enlistees with criminal records. In February 2008, the *Baltimore Sun* wrote that there was "a significant increase in the number of recruits with what the Army terms 'serious criminal misconduct' in their background" -- a category that included "aggravated assault, robbery, vehicular manslaughter, receiving stolen property and making terrorist threats."[32] From 2004 to 2005, the number of those recruits rose by

more than 54 percent, while alcohol and illegal drug waivers, reversing a four-year decline, increased by more than 13 percent.[33]

The rise of violent street gangs across America since the 1970's has also contributed to a decline in the acceptable recruiting population. African-American street gangs like the Bloods and Crips once geographically isolated in Southern California have migrated across the country and are found in all urban areas.[34] Gang membership numbers are hard to estimate, but one study conducted in 1988 estimated that there were over 70,000 Bloods and Crips in Los Angeles County alone. That number represents over 25 percent of all African-American males living in L.A. County between the ages of 15 and 24.[35] Latino gangs like the Latin Kings and the Mara Salvatrucha 13 have expanded from their South-West regional bases and have greatly increased their membership numbers. Latino gang membership now numbers in the tens of thousands nationwide.[36] White extremist groups like the Skinheads, once on the decline, are also making a strong comeback.[37] The majority of Skinheads are males in their teens or early twenties but female representation is growing.[38] To remain sustainable, defend their territory, expand their criminal enterprise and remain competitive with one another, these gangs must aggressively conduct membership campaigns. Becoming increasingly more sophisticated in their recruiting techniques, these gangs now utilize social network sites such as MySpace®, YouTube® and Facebook® to reach out to potential recruits.[39] The gangs use music, parties, drugs, and training in martial arts and weapons as recruiting enticements along with promoting the values of duty, loyalty, and brotherhood.[40] Collectively, gangs have demonstrated the power of influence and persuasion, forcefully targeting middle-school students to join the gang.[41] These

sophisticated membership drives, while not in direct conflict with the Army's recruiting

campaign, complicate the Army's ability to reach older teens. By the time many

teenagers reach recruitment age they have already joined a gang and most have likely

committed a serious crime. Both the gangs and the Army look for physically fit, mentally

able young men and women who display a desire to serve and an aspiration to belong.

Unfortunately, street gangs have a potent recruiting advantage because they target

younger children through their persistent presence in the schools and neighborhoods,

and by their frightening use of threats and violence.

Emergence of Red State Army

Another challenge for recruiters is the continuing polarization of American

politics. The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terror have all been,

rightly or wrongly, associated with President Bush and the Republican Party. President

Barack Obama was elected in large measure on his centerpiece stance to end the war

in Iraq, and bring the combat troops home within 16 months. As a political institution the

Democratic Party is viewed as the party of peace, and therefore, in regions with large

Democrat constituencies many young adults received negative guidance or feedback

about joining the Army during the Bush administration.   A 2008 Gallup Poll found wide

regional variation when asked, "Suppose you had a child or grandchild who was

considering his/her career options. How likely would you be to recommend that they

enter the military"? Sixty percent of Region Nine respondents, defined as New England

plus New York and New Jersey, all historically Blue States, answered "not likely at all

(46%) or not likely (14%). Region One, defined as California, Hawaii and Alaska had

similar responses with 43% and 13% respectively.[42] Region Four, representing Texas,

Oklahoma, New Mexico and Kansas and Region Six comprised of Alabama, Florida and Mississippi, traditional Red States, answered 30% and 31% for "not likely at all" and 14% and 12% respectively for, "not likely."[43] At the other end of the response continuum, Region Six had double the positive response of "extremely likely" than Region's One and Nine."[44]

Specific states and geographic regions are overrepresented in the Army while others are underrepresented, reflecting a greater propensity for military service. Northeastern, Midwestern, and far Western States are underrepresented and have a lower propensity for military service.[45] Only nine counties of the top 100 counties represent traditional Blue States and all of them are in rural areas. [46] Over the past four decades, or during the time period of the all-volunteer force, California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois and New York have gone from being in the top12 states for veteran-to-population ratio, to being listed in the bottom 10 states with the lowest number of post-Vietnam vets per capita. New Jersey is 50th of the 50 states; just 1 percent of current residents have served in the military since Vietnam.[47] The under-represented, politically aligned Democrat, or Blue States contain the nation's largest urban population centers, which are the most ethnically and racially diverse, a key demographic for Army recruiters. Standing in stark contrast to the Northeast's veteran population numbers, the majority of Southern and Central Western States are currently overrepresented with respect to Army service. The largest percentage of military recruits represents Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Florida, and Texas.[48]

An off shoot of the Red State–Blue State divide is a shift in the racial make-up of the Army. Because the urban centers have the largest minority populations, recruiting

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within that demographic group has suffered. Recruiting figures from 2006 and 2007, indicate that Hispanics are underrepresented but African-Americans and Caucasians are overrepresented.[49] The overrepresentation by African-Americans is misleading as other reports show a steady decline in their propensity to serve during the last four years.[50] Army Officer recruiting shows a similar occurrence during the last four years. In four-year Reserve Officer Training Commands (ROTC) programs, African-Americans are currently overrepresented, but the African-American college student's propensity to serve has reversed since 2004.

The shrinking of the Army's size since the end of the Cold War and the increase in U.S. population has also played a supporting role in the recruiting challenge. Since 1970, the population of the United States has grown by about 50 percent, from roughly 200 million to 300 million. Over the same period, the number of active-duty armed forces has fallen approximately 50%, from 3 million to 1.4 million. A far smaller percentage of the citizenry now serves in the military compared to just three decades before. In 1969, 13% of Americans were veterans, compared to 2007 when only 8% of the population has served.[51] Gallup Poll results identified a statistically significant differential between active duty servicemembers, veterans and individuals with no military history or affiliation. When asked, "Suppose you had a child or grandchild who was considering his/her career options. How likely would you be to recommend that they enter the military," 56% of the active and 44% of the veterans responded favorably while 55% of the non-affiliated civilians responded negatively.[52] Simply put, there are far fewer veterans to tell the Army story. Fewer veterans equates to less interaction and

connection with the general populace which contributes to less understanding and acceptance of the Army's mission and the sacrifices of its Soldiers.

Weight and Health Issues

Another troubling development for Army recruiters in modern American youth is their overall poor quality of health, reducing the size of the recruiting pool. A few years ago observers coined the phrase "the Nintendo Generation" because of the age group's love of video games. The primitive Nintendo systems has transformed and become almost unrecognizable. It has been replaced by substantially more advanced indoor video systems, flat screens televisions, powerful computers with sophisticated graphic-interface chips, high-speed internet connections, IPODs, G3 cell phones that take and send pictures and video, internet searches, text messages, and numerous other high-tech gadgets or programs designed to keep teens and young adults entertained and socially connected. The emergence of these interactive technologies leads to increased periods of physical inactivity, directly resulting in a disturbing uptrend in obesity and other childhood diseases caused by poor diet and lack of exercise. According to an American Obesity Society study, 30.4 percent of all adolescents, ages 12 to 19 are overweight, while 15.5 percent are considered obese.[53] Additionally, 49 states currently have obesity rates above 20 percent.[54] Compounding this phenomenon is skyrocketing diagnoses of childhood syndromes like autism, clinical depression, asthma, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and Attention Deficit Disorder. Over 25% of all U.S. children lack adequate access to primary health care.[55] The lack of health care compounds poor health choices in terms of diet, exercise, and healthy behaviors. From

2003 to 2007, the percentage of medical waivers to enter the military more than doubled, from 4.1% to 8.6%.[56]

<u>Army Recruiting Initiatives</u>

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command recently released a new Human Dimension Framework that links the current global strategic environment to the challenges of recruiting. The Army describes the human dimension as encompassing the moral, physical and cognitive components of the Soldier, leader, and organizational development and performance essential to raise, prepare and employ the Army in full spectrum operations.[57] In uncharacteristically blunt language, the study finds that current accession, personnel policies, force training and educational development will not meet the future challenges. It goes on to say that failure to meet these challenges places at great risk the Army's ability to execute the National Security Strategy, the National Defense, and National Military Strategies.[58] Training and Doctrine command offers four solution synopses; two of these findings have relevance to this paper and are noteworthy.

1. The Army will need to increase its human dimension focus in both the operational Army and the Generating Force in order to meet future challenges.

2. The Army must widen the community of practice in the human dimension to continue to explore how we can best recruit, train, and retain an all volunteer force that can operate across the entire range of military conflict.[59]

The study chartered an aggressive course of action for the future, concluding that many basic premises about recruiting and retention must be re-evaluated. These re-

evaluations include enhancing initial entry programs to close cognitive and physical gaps, expanding physical fitness as a component of the concept of holistic fitness, tailoring fitness to the individual and mission requirements, adding science and technology enablers to enhance Soldier performance, and developing policies and programs to retain qualified physically disabled Soldiers. In the cognitive domain the study finds that Soldiers will face increasingly difficult operational dilemmas that will test their willingness to behave ethically and maintain discipline in the face of very stressful events.[60]

Not all prognostications for Army recruiting are negative. The Army exceeded its 2008 recruitment goal by over 500 personnel. "Recruiting isn't a challenge for the Army, it's a challenge for the nation," said, Major General Thomas P. Bostick, commanding general of U.S. Army Recruiting Command.[61] Contributing to the success of the Army's recruiting efforts this year is the implementation of some bold and innovative programs such as The Army Experience Center (AEC), The Army Preparatory School (APS) and the Army Strong Zone. These three pilot programs have revolutionized the way the Army interacts with the public and the programs have already shown positive results.

The Army Experience Center (AEC) will replace the traditional storefront recruiting station as an interactive recruiting and marketing laboratory designed to inform visitors about the many opportunities for Army careers, training, education, and personal growth, using virtual experiences that entertain while educating.[62] Furthermore, the AEC is fully integrated with Army Public Affairs and is designed to act as a community hub for outreach activities, high school visits, and other Army

engagements in the community. The one-of-a-kind pilot program is located in the Franlin Mills Mall in a Philadelphia suburb.[63]

The Army Preparatory School (APS) is designed to address the national high school graduation challenge. The Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) established the pilot program to help young men and women who want to enlist in the Army obtain their General Equivalency Diploma. The program, located at the Basic Combat Training Center of Excellence, Fort Jackson, SC, identifies high-quality applicants and then provides the academic instruction necessary to earn a high school degree prior to attending Basic Training. This course opened in August 2008, and the Army enlisted 420 recruits into the program during the remainder of fiscal 2008. General William S. Wallace, commanding general of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command said, "This is an opportunity they can't get elsewhere and an opportunity to serve in the Army."[64] It will be open only to applicants who score in the top 50 percentile on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, and those who aren't eligible to return to high school.[65]

The Army Strong Zone is designed as an interactive exhibit that showcases the Army's latest technology and adventure displays.[66] It is employed as a major community outreach tool and will be employed potentially anywhere there are large crowds such as professional and college football games, racing events and large shopping areas.

These three initiatives are the most innovative and bold programs the Army has designed in years but they may be fundamentally flawed because they fail to adequately address the underlying factors that have created the current recruiting challenges. Only

the APS directly targets one of the major recruiting challenges: declining high school graduation rates.

The current recruiting strategy is designed to meet the Army's manpower goals for the pre-9/11 environment. The strategic environment and the recruiting environment have changed so as to mandate a new goal. Strategies to attract recruits' attention and interest with training, experience, pay and benefits are suitable for a steady-state numbers-oriented goal. The strategy is not suitable to increase the numbers of high-quality troops needed for prolonged conflict in a constrained recruiting environment. Current strategy is acceptable to the Army and the nation as the price of security. The significant monetary investment in recruiting and incentives is more acceptable than the inequities associated with the draft. The sociopolitical environment suggests that further investment will be supported by the American people if they continue to support America's engagement in prolonged conflict. The critical test of the strategy is its feasibility: is it adequately resourced with the means [programs and people] to attain the desired end state? The current Army recruiting strategy focuses its engagement on the qualified 30% of the target age group and only marginally seeks to broaden the recruiting pool. The factors contracting the recruiting pool have changed the recruiting goals: not merely to recruit from an eligible pool but to enlarge the eligible pool of candidates. A new goal for a new recruiting environment demands new strategies.

Recommendation

In order to meet future recruiting demands the Army must not only continue to implement innovative programs that attract quality young men and women but it must also re-evaluate how it interacts with the American public. The Army's current recruiting

and outreach programs, innovative though they may be, are systemically flawed because they target a demographic that may already be in a state of failure. The Army must find a legal and ethical method to engage the public at a much younger age and help shape and change societal attitudes, beliefs, and the behaviors of potential future recruits and their adult influencers. The Army cannot continue merely to react to the deteriorating recruiting environment; it must take a proactive stance and actively inject itself into the larger problem of societal change to create the conditions for positive transformation. The Army must directly target the causes of a shrinking recruiting pool and direct its resources to enabling lasting change. In a speech to recruiters, General Chiarelli challenged Army recruiters to aggressively take on the problem, "In Iraq, it was meeting the Iraqi's where they were at - not where we wanted them to be. It was a coordinated effort of military hard power and diplomatic and economic soft power seeking to achieve local results. And in the same vein, as the United States Recruiting Command, we have to meet our customer, meet America, where they are at -- not where we want them to be."[67] General Chiarelli suggests the future of Army recruiting: to take the initiative and shape the environment as we shape the battlefield. The Army is a reflection of the broader society; the Army can and should take a role in combating teen obesity, teen crime, ever declining high school graduation rates and apathy.

The Army needs a recruiting strategy that counters the negative trends that are, in turn, contracting the recruiting pool. The Drug, Abuse, Resistance and Education (D.A.R.E) program created in 1983 by Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates is a behavior modification program that suggests a new strategy for Army consideration. Gates based his program on his contention that the present generation had already

surrendered to drug dependency and that the country's future lay with the readiness of its children to resist involvement.[68] Gates believed that uniformed police officers were the best equipped to deliver the message that drug use has adverse effects. For many children, the first time they interacted with a police officer was when they were either being arrested or during a time of stress. Gates changed this negative association by sending his police officers into the schools and the communities to deliver the anti-drug message directly to the children in a positive and unthreatening atmosphere. The Army's challenge to create favorable impressions is similar in that most potential recruits will first interact with the Army in a recruiting station at 17 years of age or older. Gates' model shows that this dynamic can be changed to one where Soldiers and citizens, including potential recruits, interact frequently and not only when a youth is recruited.

Creating U.S. societal change has never been the Army's mission, although it has frequently taken the lead on such transformative issues such as racial integration and women's rights. Though the Army's progressive policies were often the catalyst for change, institutionally, it never deliberately undertook an operation to alter American culture. To defeat the recruiting challenge, the Army must adapt a new enterprise management system that identifies the recruiting environment as a legitimate threat to national security. The Army has the resources and the demonstrated expertise practiced in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Philippines, to become an agent of change. The Army must adapt programs that support this shifting outlook. It must recognize that the decline in youth eligible for military service is a threat to national security, and must then allocate the resources of money and manpower necessary to sustain the recruiting

environment. Current policy of increasing incentives will not change the overall number

of potential recruits; it can only affect the 30% that have already made the right

decisions to stay physically fit, not get arrested, or not abuse drugs. New policy must

influence the factors responsible for the declining number of those eligible to serve:

overweight and obese teens, teens with felony records, decreasing percentage of teens

without a high school diploma, and increasingly teens without any adult influencers who

have experience in, knowledge of, or an appreciation for the Army.

An effective initiative will target these larger societal problems by increasing

Army presence in major urban areas, located initially and predominately, in large urban

areas located in the Blue States. Building upon its already successful Army Experience

Centers and Army Preparatory School concept, the Army should combine or modify

these two innovative programs into one all-encompassing enterprise jointly located in a

single physical location that would provide increased interaction between citizen and

Soldier. The structures would not function as recruiting offices but rather as Centers for

Academic and Athletic Excellence. These centers would provide a safe haven for

youths to focus on academics, athletics, and good citizenship, and could be modeled

after the successful Police Athletic Leagues or Young Men's Christian Association.

These centers could directly combat many of the challenges to the current recruiting

environment, increase the Army's presence in urban/ blue state neighborhoods, swell

the ranks of strong positive male and female role models, mitigate negative peer

influence, and, possibly, provide an economic stimulus in some traditionally

disadvantaged neighborhoods.   Over a period of time, these youths could make

intelligent, informed, mature life decisions and would represent a superior quality recruit

once they reached the appropriate age. The centers would limit their instruction and coaching to non-military specific subjects and would not attempt to augment or replicate a Junior Reserve Officer Training Command (JROTC) program.

These centers would enhance the findings of the Human Dimension Framework, by increasing focus in the Generating Force in order to meet future challenges, widen the community of practice in the human dimension, and continue to explore how the Army can best recruit, train, and retain an all volunteer force. The centers would focus on providing young people with a safe environment to advance their academics and to participate in athletics. The centers would be staffed by Soldiers and civilians specifically trained and resourced to teach and coach young adults. Any Soldier would be eligible for the program but a significant percentage would be drawn from the Wounded Warrior Program. Centers staffed by wounded warriors would serve two purposes, dramatically show the American public the enormous sacrifices endured by these extraordinary young Soldiers, and provide the warriors themselves a valuable outlet for their expertise. Working in concert with the local school systems the centers could offer tutoring, remedial and/or advanced instruction in core subjects and present additional or elective classes in languages, leadership, cultural understanding and acceptance, health and physical fitness. Leadership labs and reaction courses could provide the basic foundations for individual and organizational decision making that would bolster a youth's pride and self image. The leadership labs could be designed with increasing levels of social, ethical and legal complexity that could benefit young adults in their daily lives but also easily transfer to future combat scenarios.

In the athletic arena, the Army should capitalize on the current popularity among young adults for the martial arts or combative sports. Martial arts, defined as wrestling, karate, boxing and judo are relatively inexpensive in comparison to other sports that require equipment and outdoor space which can be environmentally dependent. Unlike football, baseball and to a lesser degree soccer these combative sports can be taught by male or female instructors and the instruction can take place one-on-one, in a unisex group or in a mixed class. Instruction in the martial arts could provide many youngsters with the beneficial traits of self-confidence, discipline and a respect for authority. These traits would serve the youths well in their daily lives but also have enormous long-term applicability on a complex battlefield. The Army's ranks are full of qualified practitioners of these combative sports to staff the centers. The United States Military Academy requires that all of its Cadets receive primary instruction in wrestling, combatives and boxing. These core fighting courses are the first time that many of the Army's future leaders have been exposed to this type of direct physical confrontation. The lessons are designed not only to provide an understanding of self defense but also how to marshal resolve and overcome fear and adversity. By instructing martial arts to younger children, these Centers for Academic and Athletic Excellence could directly challenge the lure of urban gangs that teach some form of fighting. These courses combined with standard aerobic and weight lifting classes could instill in children the habit of fitness and a desire to stay in shape.

Conclusion

An Army Academic and Athletic Centers initiative is one possible solution to an evolving and complex problem with a direct impact on the future of this nation's strategic

defense. This solution examines the beginnings of an impending crisis and seeks to combat it at its root elements. It does so fully recognizing that there are many legal and statutory requirements, both civilian and military, and also many perceived institutional or organizational roadblocks, and resource issues that must be examined more closely before this concept can be implemented.

The time for cultural and institutional change is now. The strategic need is real. The threat of an undersized and unqualified Army is looming and the current programs in place may not meet our future requirements. As General Chiarelli stated, "If you know Clausewitz, you know the idea that war is an extension of politics. And if you accept the premise that politics is advocating an idea to create advantage ....then you can make the leap that we are, and have always been, in a war of ideas. The primacy of an idea can only be achieved through action and the results of actions."[69]

Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's Chief of Staff once proposed, "It's time for a real Patriot Act that brings out the patriot in all of us. We propose universal civilian service for every young American. Under this plan, all Americans between the ages of 18 and 25 will be asked to serve their country by going through three months of basic training, civil defense preparations and community service.[70]

The Army can continue to focus its recruiting programs toward youth of eligible age, the majority of whom are not qualified for enlistment, or it can lead change with a new comprehensive program that targets the causes of dwindling recruitment.

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