

Low Quality Recruits - Don't Want to Go to War with Them, Can't Go Without Them: Their Impact on the All-Volunteer Force

**A Monograph
by
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Low Quality Recruits - Don't Want to Go to War with Them, Can't Go Without Them:
Their Impact on the All-Volunteer Force

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Abstract

Low Quality Recruits - Don't Want to Go to War with Them, Can't Go without Them: Their Impact on the All-Volunteer Force by Major George L. Moore, ARMY, 58 pages.

The United States' All-Volunteer Force (AVF) is embroiled in the longest ground combat power intensive conflict in its history. The Army's massive need for Soldiers has placed so much strain on the Army recruiting system that at times recruit quality has been sacrificed to achieve sufficient troop strength. If this is true, then how much of an impact does the drop in quality have and what is the repercussion? In the last few years, media headlines have proclaimed that the US Army has resorted to accepting lower quality recruits to increase and maintain an appropriate strength level to continue current Army commitments. The ability of the Army to enlist and keep Soldiers directly affects its ability to sustain the troop levels needed in support of Army operations. This monograph examines low quality recruits and their impact on the AVF.

The scope of this research covers the time period from the end of the last draft, 30 June 1973, until the present, and the research explores the possibility of a definitive link between lower Army entrance standards and negative impacts on the Army. The entrance standards consist of criteria based on education, physical waivers, criminal or moral waivers, and the Armed Forces Vocational Assessment Battery (ASVAB). ASVAB scores and recruit education level play a major role in the costs of recruiting, training, and force maintenance; therefore, higher entrance standards generate higher costs, and produce higher performing Soldiers while lower entrance standards produce lower costs and performance.

Viewing the matriculation of a recruit from recruitment through the institutional Army to the operational Army as a system clearly illustrates how low quality recruits can negatively impact the Army. New recruits, as raw material are the inputs of the institutional Army. The institutional Army is the processing component of the system where the recruits are trained, educated, and molded into Soldiers. The institutional Army's products are Soldiers which are the inputs to the operational Army. The performance of Soldiers during Army operations collectively corresponds to the Army's operational performance.

This research shows how lowering entrance standards increases the potential number of applicants in the recruiting pool by allowing previously ineligible people to enlist in the Army. The measures that were investigated to determine low quality recruits negative impact on the Army are the number of recruits discharged before the end of their enlistment and retention. Also, this monograph examined what mitigating systems or processes the Army has established to prevent low quality recruits from negatively impacting the AVF.

The AVF continues to exceed the expectations of its framers, and comprises the best military force in the country's history. Failure in the Vietnam War resulted in national angst about the draft. Political and senior Army leaders do not want the AVF to fail. Therefore, it would seem that the U.S. has placed almost all of its bets on the AVF. The current conflict has stretched the AVF near the breaking point and its vulnerabilities have been realized. Selective Service continues to be funded and administered by the government as a potential option in case the AVF is stretched beyond its elasticity.

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Introduction

In the last few years, media headlines have proclaimed that the US Army has resorted to accepting lower quality recruits to increase and maintain an appropriate strength level to continue current Army commitments.¹ The ability of the Army to enlist and keep Soldiers directly affects its ability to sustain the troop levels needed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2005, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) examined the recruiting and retention rates of the Army and the implications of those rates, because it was the only service that failed to achieve its recruiting mission that year. The Army achieved ninety-two percent of its recruiting mission of 80,000. The eight percent that it did not get equates to 6,600 Soldiers, or almost two Brigade Combat Teams (BCT).²

The headlines appear true when viewed in light of comments made by senior Army leaders in 2005. In October 2005, during news conferences at the annual convention of the Association of the U.S. Army, Army Secretary, Noel Harvey and Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody admitted the Army was using “looser” Defense Department rules that permit it to sign up more high school dropouts and people who score lower on mental-qualification tests; however, “the Army will keep its limit on new Soldiers with General Education Diplomas (GED) at ten percent per year.”³

In August 2004 the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, initiated a classified study that concluded that the U.S. did not have an adequate number of troops to sustain the global operational tempo. Many in the government and the Department of Defense have espoused that the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq prevent the U.S. from responding militarily, if another crisis were to arise in

¹ “Lower Standards Help Army Meet Recruiting Goal,” *USA Today* (October 9, 2006); “Pentagon to Unveil New Recruiting Waivers,” *MSNBC*, July 1, 2008; “Fewer High-Quality Army Recruits: As War Needs Rise, Exam Scores Drop,” *Boston Globe* (June 1, 2007).

² Congressional Budget Office, “The Impact of Recruiting and Retention on Future Army End Strength: An Interim Report,” (November 30, 2005), <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/69xx/doc6906/11-30-Recruitment.pdf> (accessed September 10, 2009).

³ Joseph Galloway, “Army Moves to Recruit More High School Dropouts,” *Knight Ridder News Service*, October 4, 2005, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/1004-01.htm> (accessed May 23, 2009).

North Korea or Iran for example. Retired Army General Barry McCaffrey stated, "We can't respond to another major crisis right now. We have shot our wad."⁴

Recognizing the strain on the Army, U.S. Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, announced on 20 July 2009, that the, "Army faces a period where its ability to deploy combat units at acceptable fill rates is at risk." He went on to say that the Active Army's end strength would be temporarily increased by 22,000 from the current end strength of 547,000 to 569,000, to alleviate the strain on the Army from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁵

This problem is not a new issue brought on by the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The General Accounting Office (GAO) testified about the same issue before the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate in February 2000. Norman J. Rabkin, Director, National Security Preparedness Issues, National Security and International Affairs Division stated, "Over the past two years, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force have been experiencing problems in recruiting qualified enlisted personnel." He testified that the "Army and the Navy are expanding their recruiting target markets" and illustrated that the Army has developed innovative approaches to get new recruits, to include those who did not graduate high school.⁶

Field Manual 1, *The Army*, states, "The Army provides combatant commanders with versatile land forces ready to fight and win the nation's wars" by supplying prompt, sustained land dominance across spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders.⁷ Since ancient times, the key component of any army has been its Soldiers. From the Spartans and the Roman Legions, to the United States Army today, the quality of an army is based on the quality of its leaders, education,

⁴ Mark Thompson and Phil Zabriskie, "Does The U.S. Need The Draft," *Time Magazine*, October 18, 2004, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,995411,00.html> (accessed June 18, 2009).

⁵ David Morgan, "Gates Announces Temporary Increase In U.S. Army," *Reuters*, July 20, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN20113725> (accessed May 22, 2009).

⁶ United States Government Accounting Office, "Military Personnel First-Term Recruiting and Attrition Continue," February 24, 2000, 1-2, <http://www.gao.gov/archive/2000/ns00102t.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2009).

⁷ Department of the Army, *FM-1* (2005), 1-1.

training, and primarily on it Soldiers; therefore, the quality of recruits is vitally important and can have strategic and operational implications.

The Army has consistently stated that quality, in the military sense, is enlisting young men and women who are “a higher-caliber than those who were dragged into uniform by the draft.”⁸ Since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973, the number of new recruits who scored within the “top three of four mental categories for eligibility has increased from seventy-six percent to ninety-three percent;” meanwhile, the Army has decreased the percentage of lowest-category recruits from twenty-four percent to eleven percent.⁹ The Army plans to continue this trend and maintain its effort of increasing the standards so eventually the lowest mental category can be eliminated.

In 2004, there were signs that the appeal of military service had diminished due to the danger of serving in Iraq and the stress of long deployments. For the first time in ten years the Army National Guard (ANG) reported a failure to achieve its recruiting mission by about ten percent, which roughly equates to 5,000 Soldiers. As a metric to gauge if and when the Army will achieve its recruiting mission, the Army prefers to have thirty-six percent its recruiting mission in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP).¹⁰ By having thirty-six percent of new recruits in the pipeline and depending on when these recruits report to basic combat training, some of the pressure to reach the mission is alleviated. For example, from 2004 to 2008 the Army’s recruiting mission was 80,000. Of that 80,000, thirty-six percent or 28,800 would already be contracted (DEP); therefore, the Army would only have to focus on recruiting the difference or 51,200 new recruits each year. However, the Army

⁸ Thompson and Zabriskie, “Does The U.S. Need The Draft.”

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Joe Burlas, “Recruiting Command Hits Active Army, Reserve Recruiting Goals,” *TRADOC News Service*, October 4, 2004, <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/PAO/TNSarchives/October04/101204.htm> (accessed October 16, 2009).

failed to achieve its recruiting goal by about 2,000 recruits for February 2005.¹¹ This shortage in recruitment exacerbates the problem even further given that the Army used stop-loss, Individual Ready Reserves (IRR) call ups, and moved new recruits from its DEP into basic training earlier than scheduled.

The DEP is an actual enlistment into the inactive reserves, with an agreement to report for active duty on a specific future date. Under current regulations, one can remain in the DEP for up to 365 days.¹² The number of young people who committed in 2004 to join the Army in 2005 was only eighteen percent, fifty percent less than what is preferred when assessing the progress of meeting recruitment goals. On 29 June 2004, the Army announced it would recall 5,674 members of its Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) back to active duty for 2004 and 2005.¹³

On October 1, 2004, the U.S. Army recalled 5,600 IRR Soldiers to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan to fill the shortages of critical skill personnel. Three thousand nine hundred of those IRR Soldiers received orders to report and approximately one third resisted returning to active duty. The IRR consists of over 110,000 people who have completed voluntary military commitments, however, they have time remaining on the eight year military obligation.¹⁴ “These are the cracks that are beginning to show,” Senator Jack Reed, D-RI and a former Army officer, told *TIME*. Senator Reed continued by adding, “With more deployments, those cracks are going to get bigger. We're in grave danger of breaking the force.”¹⁵

¹¹ Dave Moniz, “Army Misses Recruiting Goal,” *USA Today*, March 2, 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-03-02-army-goal_x.htm (accessed June 19, 2009).

¹² Lola M Zook, *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*, United States Army Research Institute for the behavioral and Social Science, Virginia (1996), 77.

¹³ Tom Squitieri, “Former Soldiers Slow to Report,” *USA Today*, September 27, 2004, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-09-27-reserves_x.htm, (accessed October 3, 2009).

¹⁴ Will Dunham, “U.S. Army to call up 5,000 More Ex-Soldiers in 2005,” *Reuters*, October 1, 2004, <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/world/iraq/20041001-1551-iraq-usa-troops.html> (accessed October 3, 2009).

¹⁵ Jeff Fleisher, “US Military: Help Wanted,” *Global Policy Forum*, October 13, 2004, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/22/in-afghanistan-us-militarys-help-wanted-sign/> (accessed June 11, 2009).

Enlisted Soldiers comprise the bulk of the manpower of the Army; consequently, enlisted recruitment has developed as an interesting topic due to the many Pentagon reports and United States Army Recruiting Command recruiting data indicating the service failing to achieve its recruiting goals in fiscal year 2005. The Army is at a pivotal point in which it needs to increase its recruiting pool in order to fill its ranks and increase its end-strength to continue conducting Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), as well as other enduring Army commitments. To prevent another recruiting shortfall similar to FY 2005, the Army has lowered educational and entrance standards to increase the number of potential recruits.¹⁶

The central theme of this study is determining if lowering the entrance standards of the Army to increase recruitment has a significant negative impact on the Army as an All-Volunteer Force. Army operational readiness is the Army's ability to meet the demands of the nation's military strategy and it is dependent upon unit readiness. Unit readiness is "derived from the ability of each unit to deliver the outputs for which it was designed," and ultimately, Soldiers provide the unit's capability.¹⁷ For this monograph, the Army's operational performance is defined as the Army units' performance measured against standards and their ability to effectively and efficiently achieve objectives, when executing defensive, offensive, support, and/or stability operations.

Using a system framework, recruits are the inputs of the institutional Army and the institutional outputs are the inputs to the operational Army; therefore, the quality of recruits affects the Army's operational performance.¹⁸ It is vitally important to the security of the nation to know if low-quality recruits have a significant negative impact on the All-Volunteer Force. If this is true, then the Army's ability to win the nation's wars suffers, which impacts the nation's foreign policy,

¹⁶ Thompson and Zabriskie. "Does The U.S. Need The Draft."

¹⁷ Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military Terms*, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/data/r/6522.html> (accessed October 19, 2009).

¹⁸ Frank A. Camm, Cynthia R. Cook and Ralph Masi, "What the Army needs to Know to Align its Operational and Institutional Activities," (RAND Corporation, 2007), 3.

by dramatically changing the application or potential application of the instruments of national power.

Methodology

The scope of this research covers the time period from the end of the draft, 30 June 1973, until the present, and the research explored the possibility of a definitive link between lower Army entrance standards and negative impacts on the Army. The entrance standards consist of criteria based on education, physical waivers authorized by DoD Directive 6130.3, December 15, 2000, criminal or moral waivers authorized by DoD Directive 1304.26, December 21, 1993, and Armed Forces Vocational Assessment Battery (ASVAB) governed by Congress, 10 U.S.C. 520 and DoD Directive 1145.1. The research shows how lowering entrance standards increases the potential number of applicants in the recruiting pool, by allowing previously ineligible people, to enlist in the Army. The measures that were investigated to determine low quality recruits negative impacts on the Army are the number of recruits discharged before the end of their enlistment and retention. Also, this monograph examined what mitigating systems or processes that the Army has established to prevent low quality recruits from negatively impacting the All-Volunteer Force.

The first standard that will be examined is education, which is defined as whether or not the aspiring recruit graduated from high school, earned a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, or has accomplished neither. The second standard that was studied is commonly referred to as “criminal history” or a “moral waiver.” Federal law requires potential recruits to disclose every criminal conviction on recruiting applications to include misdemeanors and felonies. If the applicant divulges a crime, the recruiter thinks that the applicant is being untruthful, or a record is indicated during the Entrance National Agency Check (ENAC), then the recruiter will request a complete criminal record from local law enforcement agencies.¹⁹ An ENAC consists of a check of the files of

¹⁹ Rod Powers, “U.S. Military Enlistment Standards,” *About.com: US Military*, http://usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/enlstandards2_2.htm (accessed June 10, 2009).

a number of government agencies for pertinent facts bearing on the loyalty and trustworthiness of the individual. The main reason for the ENAC is to establish the suitability of an individual for entry into the service.²⁰

The third standard this monograph explored was waivers for physical defects. The disqualifying conditions are codified in United States Military Entrance Processing Command Regulation 40-1, Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 6130.3, *Physical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, and Induction*, and DoD Instruction 6130.4, *Criteria and Procedure Requirements for Physical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction in the Armed Forces*.

The fourth standard examined was performance on the ASVAB. The ASVAB consists of ten written tests given to all who aspire to enlist in the military. The ASVAB “measures verbal, math, and technical aptitudes.” Since 1976, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and the Coast Guard have used the ASVAB. The Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), incorporated into the ASVAB, was constructed to identify aptitudes in aspiring recruits and to pair them with the military occupation specialty (MOS) that suits them best.²¹

This monograph examines first term separation and retention as measures to determine the impact of low quality recruits on readiness and operational performance. The first measure of a decrease in readiness and operational performance explored was early first term separation, defined as recruits who did not complete the terms of their initial service contract. The last measure investigated was retention, defined as those Soldiers serving in the Active Army, who opt for immediate reenlistment or extension of enlistment. For Soldiers separating from the Active Army,

²⁰ National Agency Check, http://www.tpub.com/content/aviation/14243/css/14243_219.htm (accessed May 18, 2009).

²¹ Zook. *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*, 8.

retention prescribes eligibility criteria and options for enlistment or transfer into the Reserve Component.²²

Literature Review

The sources considered in this review include books, research by government think tanks, peer-reviewed scholarly journals, internet databases, monographs, theses, dissertations and professional publications in the fields of military recruiting, military service entrance standards, the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), conscription (Selective Service and Universal Military Service), and retention. Many of the sources looked at whether conscription or the AVF was better for the country. Advocates for conscription argued that conscription allows for a much larger army in peace and war, is cheaper to maintain than the AVF, creates more civic minded citizens, and would be of higher quality due to the drawing skills from a cross section of society.

The sources advocating the AVF suggest that the AVF is more disciplined, more professional because Soldiers are not in the Army against their will, which reduces the costs of training, and increases retention. Many of the sources used research, surveys, and statistical analysis to arrive at most of the quantifiable results. On the question of quality, many sources used data from historical studies and research on ASVAB scores. Quite a few sources discuss recruiting, low quality, low ASVAB scores, and the AVF; however, almost none talk about the systems that the Army has developed or established to mitigate the effect of low quality recruits on the Army's operational readiness or performance. The following is a summary of the key findings of the literature review.

The All-Volunteer Force vs. Conscription Debate

The Founding Fathers, using a philosophy based on the writings of John Locke, created a system of government that establishes certain unalienable rights that are guaranteed by the

²² Department of the Army, *Army Retention Program*, Army Regulation 601-280 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 31, 2006), i.

government. Some advocates believe forcing citizens into the military is in direct violation of the philosophy of the Founding Fathers. The original Thirteen Colonies utilized a militia system for defense. When the number of volunteers were inadequate to generate the needed manpower during campaigns, conscription was used; although rarely. States occasionally drafted men for the militia or to man state Continental Army units during the American Revolutionary War, but conscription was not a power of the central government.²³

Thomas Jefferson first suggested that the U.S. not have a standing army, and wrote a series of letters in 1787, as the Constitution was being debated, urging James Madison and others to write conscription into the Constitution. The idea was, instead of a standing army, for every able-bodied man in the nation to be a member of a local militia, under local control, with a gun in his house. If the nation was invaded, word would come down to the local level and every man in the country would be in the army.²⁴

During the War of 1812, Daniel Webster eloquently argued against military conscription, “Where is it written in the Constitution, in what article or section is it contained, that you may take children from their parents, and parents from their children, and compel them to fight the battles of any worth, in which the folly or the wickedness of Government may engage it?”²⁵ During the American Civil War, about two percent of Union Soldiers were conscripts and about twenty-one percent for the Confederates.²⁶ Resistance to the draft sparked the New York Draft Riots in 1863. The draft was perceived to be akin to slavery and caused widespread violent resistance in the

²³ NationMaster.com, Encyclopedia Conscription in the United States, <http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Conscription-in-the-United-States> (accessed October 3, 2009).

²⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia: A Comprehensive Collection of the Views of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. John P. Foley (Funk & Wagnells Company, 1900), 187. <http://books.google.com/books?id=2D0gAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+jeffersonian+cyclopedia#v=onepage&q=&f=false> (accessed September 18, 2009).

²⁵ Daniel Webster (1782-1852), US Senator, Speech in the House of Representatives, January 14, 1814. <http://www.constitution.org/dwebster/conscription.htm>, (accessed September 18, 2009).

²⁶ John W. Chambers, II, ed. in chief, *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 180.

South.²⁷ The debate over an army of volunteers or conscripts still lingers in the American civic and patriotic consciousness.

Conscription is required enrollment of personnel for service in the military and in the U.S., conscription has developed into Selective Service. Selective Service is a system of selecting and ordering young men to serve in the armed forces for a limited period of time.²⁸ It is not universal military service which will be addressed later. Today, Selective Service requires all male US citizens to register with Selective Service within thirty days of their 18th birthday and to potentially be called for military service in case of war. Selective Service was and still is the means by which the U.S. manages conscription.²⁹

After the United States entered “The Great War” in 1917, Congress passed the Selective Draft Act and drafted 2.8 million men for WWI.³⁰ The United States’ draft law expired in 1947 and quite a few “draft laws were enacted from 1948 to 1967.”³¹ As a reaction to personnel necessitated by the Korean War, June 1951, Congress adopted the Universal Military Training and Service Act, which basically amended the act of 1948.³² “The act provided for developing a plan for a universal military-training and service program. It lowered the draft-age liability to 18^{1/2} and increased the period of military service to two years of active duty plus a maximum of six years in the reserves.

²⁷ NationMaster.com, Encyclopedia Conscription in the United States.

²⁸ Selective Service, <http://dictionary.reverso.net/english-cobuild/selectivepercent20service> (accessed September 18, 2009).

²⁹ NationMaster.com, Encyclopedia Selective Service, <http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Selective-Service> (accessed October 3, 2009).

³⁰ NationMaster.com, Encyclopedia Selective Service Act of 1917, <http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Selective-Service-Act-of-1917> (accessed October 3, 2009).

³¹ NationMaster.com, Encyclopedia Selective Service.

³² NationMaster.com, Encyclopedia Conscription in the United States.

Lowered physical and mental standards and a limit of five million for the armed forces personnel were other important provisions.”³³

The U.S. Universal Military Service as defined by the Universal Military Training and Service Act of 2001, introduced in House of representatives on December 20, 2001 is:

the obligation (one year) of every male citizen of the United States, and every other male person residing in the United States, who is between the ages of 18 and 22 to receive basic military training and education as a member of the armed forces unless the citizen or person is exempted under the provisions of this Act. Female citizens of the United States, and other female persons residing in the United States, who are between the ages of 18 and 22 may volunteer for enlistment in the armed forces to receive basic military training and education under this Act. At the discretion of the Secretary concerned, the Secretary concerned may accept such volunteers to receive such training and education.³⁴

Conscription through either Selective Service or Universal Military Service would allow for a much larger army in peace and war in comparison to an AVF. Conscription advocates argue that a Selective Service force would be cheaper to maintain, and conscription in general would create more civic minded citizens, and would be of higher quality due to drawing skills from a cross section of society. The sampling of all of society would energize the will of the nation behind the military, because every socio-economic class would be represented and have a stake in the performance of the Army. The opposing view is that a conscripted force using the Selective Service lottery system does not get a representative sample of society and in the long term is more costly to maintain than the AVF, due to the discipline problems among draftees, and senior leaders of the Army have a tendency to rely on sheer manpower as opposed to modernization and increasing capabilities.³⁵

Conscription

Throughout most of U.S. history, volunteers provided the manpower for the nation's defense. However, during times of significant perceived threat, the U.S. has used conscription to gather the

³³ Selective Service, <http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?vendorId=FWNE.fw..se077000.a#FWNE.fw..se077000.a> (accessed October 3, 2009).

³⁴ Universal Military Training and Service Act of 2001, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c107:H.R.3598> (accessed October 3, 2009).

³⁵ Bernard Rostker, “I Want You! Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force,” (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2006).

manpower that was needed. The first use of the conscription was in March of 1863, two years into the Civil War, the second time was on 18 May 1917, right after the U.S. entered WWI. The next time was 16 Sept 1940, in preparation for World War II, and finally on 1 July 1948 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Selective Training and Service Act was supplanted by the Selective Service Act of 1948. The Selective Service act of 1948, often referred to as the Peacetime Draft, governed the draft from 1948 to 1973.³⁶

Advocates for conscription argue that "the draft serves as a vehicle for identifying the military with the society it seeks to defend."³⁷ Conscription supporters maintain that each year the civil-military gap widens because of the All-Volunteer Force, further isolating the military, creating dysfunction and possible danger.³⁸ Without the draft, citizens have a tendency to develop the personal concept that they are no longer responsible for the defense of the country.³⁹ It is believed that abolishing the use of the draft in 1973 has been the most significant event that has contributed to the severing of the bond between citizenship and military service. The breaking of this link has helped promote "a socially and politically corrosive culture of rights," and has damaged "American national unity" by removing a commonly collective experience.⁴⁰

Charles Moskos, a sociology professor at Northwestern University, conducted research and authored many books and articles on military sociology and national service.⁴¹ Dr Moskos wrote

³⁶ Walter Oi, "The Virtue of an All-Volunteer Force," CATO Institute under Individual Liberty, Free Markets, and Peace Opinion and Commentary (July 2003), http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=3182 (accessed May 15, 2009).

³⁷ Griffith, Jr., *The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force: 1968-1974*, 18.

³⁸ Joseph J. Collins and Ole Holsti, "Civil-Military Relations: How Wide is the Gap?" *International Security* 24, no. 2 (Autumn 1999), 200.

³⁹ Griffith, Jr., 18.

⁴⁰ Krebs, "Myths of the All-Volunteer Force: Rethinking Military Recruitment and the Fate of the Citizen-Soldier," (University of Minnesota), [http://www.polisci.umn.edu/~ronkrebs/Publications/Mythspercent20ofpercent20thepercent20AVFpercent20\(c%20complete\).pdf](http://www.polisci.umn.edu/~ronkrebs/Publications/Mythspercent20ofpercent20thepercent20AVFpercent20(c%20complete).pdf) (accessed May 25, 2009).

⁴¹ Charles Moskos was a professor emeritus of sociology at Northwestern University. His research interests include military sociology, national service, and Greek Americans. Professor Moskos is the author of

“The abandonment of conscription jeopardizes the nation's dual-military tradition, one-half of which—and truly its heart—is the citizen soldiery.”⁴² Conscription advocates believe that by reinstating conscription, the shared sacrifice of defending the nation would increase national unity, and enhance the moral and ethical sagacity of American society. A national service would “dispel the supposed perils of multiculturalism and large-scale immigration, reinvigorate civic-mindedness, foster equality, and re-instill a sense of shared mission and community. It would, in short, remake American citizenship and the American nation.”⁴³

Initially, it was thought that abandoning conscription would lead to a significant decrease in the overall quality of the Army. This argument is predicated upon the thought that the AVF could not attract enough volunteers in wartime to meet its requirements and those who did join would be of lower quality, because they would have fewer skills valuable in the civilian sector. The low quality of the AVF appeared to be plausible from 1973 to 1986, after the Vietnam War and again from 2003 to 2008 during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, when the Army lowered entrance standards to facilitate achievement of recruiting goals.⁴⁴

In 2005, the Army's recruiting mission was 80,000 and the Army Reserve was 22,175, both fell short and recruited 73,373 and 19,400 respectively; however, the recruiting rebounded in 2006.⁴⁵

many books including *The American Enlisted Man*, *The Military--More Than Just a Job?*, *The New Conscientious Objection*, *A Call to Civic Service*, *Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*, and *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War*, and *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*. In addition to over two hundred articles in scholarly journals, he has published pieces in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Monthly, Chicago Tribune, Atlantic Monthly, and The New Republic. His writings have been translated into nineteen languages.

⁴² Charles C Moskos, "From Citizens' Army to Social Laboratory," *Wilson Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1993):83-94, <http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-13613887/citizens-army-social-laboratory.html> (accessed July 22, 2009).

⁴³ Krebs, “Myths of the All-Volunteer Force: Rethinking Military Recruitment and the Fate of the Citizen-Soldier.”

⁴⁴ United States Congressional Budget Office, “The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance,” (July 2007), <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/83xx/doc8313/07-19-MilitaryVol.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2009).

⁴⁵ U.S. Army Recruiting Command, “U.S. Army Recruiting Command Goals,” G7/9 Marketing, Education, and Outreach, <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm> (accessed October 16, 2009).

After 2005, the active and reserve components essentially achieved their recruitment goals, but mostly due to the lower Army entrance standards; primarily education.⁴⁶ Various studies have indicated a connection between educational level, ASVAB scores, and success in the Army.⁴⁷ The links between education level and ASVAB scores also indicate that socioeconomics play an important role in scores. Families with high socioeconomic status often have more success in educating their children, due to access more resources such as high-quality child care, books, as well as easy access to information regarding their children's health, as well as social, emotional, and cognitive development⁴⁸.

“Socioeconomic representation in the volunteer force is a key interest because of concerns that the Nation's defense might fall heavily on the poor and the underclass.”⁴⁹ It has been argued that privileged people, those that have higher socioeconomic status, ability, or education, do not choose to serve in the Army because they generally can do well in the civilian sector. Conscription advocates suggests that conscription, universal service or Selective Service, would allow the Army and nation to benefit from these people abilities and skills, producing a force that would be of a higher quality than an AVF. Another factor compounding the recruiting problem is that the Army's perceived low quality diminishes its prestige; increasing the recruiting problem. This self perpetuating problem leads to “further declines in the quality, and ultimately the readiness, of the

⁴⁶ CBO, “The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance.”

⁴⁷ Armor and Sackett, 2004; Hogan et al., 2004; Gebicke, 1998; Sackett and Mavor, 2003.

⁴⁸ North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, “Socioeconomic Status,” (accessed October 3, 2009), <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/earlyclde/ea7lk5.htm>.

⁴⁹ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, “The 24th Annual Department of Defense Report on Social Representation in the U.S. Military Services,” <http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/poprep97/html/overview.html> (accessed June 20, 2009).

force.”⁵⁰ The Iraq War “has severely strained, but not irreparably harmed, the existing system of voluntary recruitment.”⁵¹

Finally, Selective Service supporters argue that the draft is cheaper than AVF, because under conscription, the Army can pay lower wages.⁵² Keeping enlisted wages low facilitates decreasing personnel cost and frees money for military equipment.⁵³ Draft proponents were right on this issue. An abundant amount of evidence exists that illustrate that personnel cost in the Army’s annual budget increased since the inception of the AVF when compared to the Vietnam-era draft system. This increase was corroborated by a General Accounting Office 1974 report. However, the CBO reported that “no cost study was done to clearly illustrate the true cost of the draft.”⁵⁴

The Soviet’s Red Army had modernized its mechanized, armored, and fire support forces in Europe, while the U.S. Army was heavily engaged in light infantry tactics in Vietnam. The Soviet threat caused the U.S. to refocus its efforts and improve training, modernize weapon systems, and re-evaluate doctrine.⁵⁵ Many historians, commentators, and Soldiers who served or were affiliated with the Army, then, describe the service as a “truly despondent force.”⁵⁶ Drugs and racial issues were significant problems and a lack of discipline was rampant throughout the Army.⁵⁷ The results of the Vietnam War were an end of conscription and the inception of the AVF. Generals Abrams

⁵⁰ United States Congressional Budget Office, “The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance,” 7.

⁵¹ Krebs, “Myths of the All-Volunteer Force: Rethinking Military Recruitment and the Fate of the Citizen-Soldier.”

⁵² CBO, “The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance,”

⁵³ Jason Berger, *The Military Draft*, (New York: The Reference Shelf, 1981), 16.

⁵⁴ CBO, “The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance.”

⁵⁵ Henry G. Gole and William A. Stofft, *General William E. Depuy: Preparing the Army For Modern War* (University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 213.

⁵⁶ Kent T. Woods, *Rangers Lead The Way: The Vision Of General Creighton W. Abrams* (US Army War College, 2003).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

and Depuy had specific ideas and a strategic vision of how the Army could be reshaped into an effective fighting force capable of deterring Soviet aggression and defending allies.

The All-Volunteer Force

The U.S. Army of today is essentially a product of General Abrams and General Depuy. In 1974, the Army was 20,000 short of authorized personnel, the retention goals were missed by eleven percent, combat arms were short by fourteen percent and only four of thirteen divisions were combat ready.⁵⁸ A frustrated Major told Drew Middleton from the New York Times, “You ought to see them, babied, pampered, dumb. Hell they couldn’t even lick the Cubans.”⁵⁹ The generals’ answer to increase the quality of the Army was professionalization and superior training and weapons. The idea was that professional military education, high quality training, and establishing standards could elevate the quality of low quality recruits. High quality training combined with superior weapons would provide an operational advantage on the battlefield. Eighteen years of developing this concept in combination with quality assurance processes have proven successful.

The proponents of the AVF exclaim that an AVF represents society along many dimensions, has less personnel turnover than conscription; and is more professional.⁶⁰ Although the AVF versus conscription debate has been a contested topic for years, the country had conscripted its armed forces for only thirty-five of its 228 years. AVF supporters advocate that enlisted personnel turnover is lower in a volunteer military than a conscripted force. The AVF initial enlistments average 47.7 months, while Vietnam era conscription, required only two years of active service.⁶¹ Advocates of

⁵⁸ Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington: Brassey’s, Inc., 1994), 7.

⁵⁹ Drew Middleton, “Armed Forces’ Problem: Finding Good Volunteers; Armed Services Seek Volunteers,” (April 17, 1974), <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10D17F63D551B778DDDAE0994DC405B848BF1D3&scp> (accessed September 5, 2009).

⁶⁰ United States Congressional Budget Office, “The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance.”

⁶¹ “Support Army Recruiting: Frequently Asked Questions about Recruiting,” <http://www.2k.army.mil/faqs.htm#term>. (accessed September 18, 2009).

the AVF assert that volunteers, who willingly chose to join, are more likely to remain in uniform as opposed to people who were forced to join. Furthermore, increased wages and the atmosphere of working with people who chose to be in the Army will enhance esprit de corps and reduce turnover. Lastly, the benefits of an AVF would be longer careers and more-experienced personnel that foster a better cadre, better training, and a more professional Army.⁶²

For thirty-six years the AVF has served and presented the nation with an Army that is motivated, educated, highly trained, disciplined, and representative of American society, although, not perfectly. Today's AVF represents society in many aspects, although, to some extent due to the "unique demands of military service" the Army is younger and has a smaller proportion of women than the population as a whole. Currently, women comprise about fourteen percent of the enlisted force and fifty percent of the civilian work force. Most recruits enlist at the age of eighteen and about half of the active duty component is between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four; whereas, this same age range is less than one-fifth of civilian work force. Until 1967, women were limited to comprising only two percent of the military and are still excluded from the traditional combat arms; infantry, field artillery, and armor.⁶³

The military is ethnically and racially diverse. African Americans are the largest minority group in the military. While the proportion has varied over the years, African Americans comprise "thirteen percent of active-duty enlisted recruits in 2005 and nineteen percent of the entire active-duty enlisted force in 2006, compared with fourteen percent of the seventeen- to forty-nine-year old U.S. population."⁶⁴ As opposed to African Americans, Hispanics are under representative in the

⁶² CBO. "The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance,"

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

military. In 2006, Hispanics were eleven percent of the enlisted force; compared to fourteen percent, in the civilian work force.⁶⁵

As of 2002, more than ninety percent of new recruits graduated high school, the national average was sixty-seven percent; furthermore, of those new recruits, sixty-seven percent scored in the higher categories of the AFQT. The Department of Defense has annually reported on social representation in the US military to ensure that the nation's poor and lower classes are not the sole bearers of the burden of defending the nation. The DoD 2004 report noted that compared to the civilian population, the Army's population is younger, eighty-five percent male, mostly married, more educated, consists of mostly middle and lower classes, and is mostly white.⁶⁶ The GAO 2005 report to Congress showed that the AVF is younger, more disciplined, physically and morally fit, and smarter than the American population.⁶⁷ These characteristics translate into lower attrition, faster training, higher performance, and improved quality.⁶⁸ The USAREC data for 2008 shows very little change in ethnic and gender breakdown of the Army.⁶⁹

The AVF continues to exceed the expectations of its framers, and comprises the best military force in the country's history.⁷⁰ On 15 October 2004, President Bush said, "We're not going to have a draft—period," and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said, "We don't need a draft." Pentagon officials, field commanders and two presidential candidates [John Kerry and George W. Bush] share

⁶⁵ CBO. "The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance,"

⁶⁶ Rostker, "I Want You! Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force."

⁶⁷ United States Government Accounting Office, "Military Personnel: Reporting Additional Service-member Demographics Could Enhance Congressional Oversight," (September 2005), 48, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05952.pdf> (accessed July 7, 2009).

⁶⁸ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), "Conscription Threatens Hard-Won Achievements and Military Readiness."

⁶⁹ U.S. Army Recruiting Command G7/9 Marketing, Education, and Outreach. "U.S. Army Recruiting Command Goals."

⁷⁰ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), "Conscription Threatens Hard-Won Achievements and Military Readiness," (January 9, 2003), <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2003/d20030114avf.pdf> (accessed July 18, 2009).

the sentiment that a draft is neither necessary nor desirable and that the US can maintain its commitments with an all-volunteer Army.⁷¹

One reason that explains why there is a preference of the AVF over conscription is that volunteers tend to stay, while draftees had a tendency to quit after serving their required two years, during the Vietnam draft era. Volunteer retention is 500 percent better than draftee retention. Given that approximately fifty percent of volunteers serve beyond their initial enlistment, the Army benefits from having a greater personnel inventory of experienced mid-grade and senior noncommissioned officers. To clarify this point better, in 1968-69, sixty-six percent of the “military was serving in its first two years of service,” while as of 2002 that number had decreased to twenty-five percent.⁷² Under the draft, Army sergeants, known as “shake and bake sergeants,” due to the high personnel turnover and low experience had less than two years experience upon promotion, whereas now, sergeants have an average of four or more years of experience.⁷³ Recruiting and retaining the required number of personnel and maintaining an acceptable level of quality is a vital issue for the AVF. Recruits are gathered from the available labor pool of the American population. The labor pool is affected by many things; therefore, the Army’s recruiting pool is similarly affected.

Making Waves in the Recruiting Pool

The pool of eligible recruits is defined by a set of entrance standards developed by DoD and the service to guide the selection of the most qualified personnel. When recruiting becomes difficult, as it has recently, questions arise on the validity of the standards and of changing them and what the consequences would be on the size and readiness of the force.⁷⁴ Many variables affect the number of

⁷¹ Thompson and Zabriskie, “Does The U.S. Need The Draft.”

⁷² Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), “Conscription Threatens Hard-Won Achievements and Military Readiness.”

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ United States National Research Council, Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment, “Assessing Fitness for Military Enlistment: Physical, Medical, and Mental Health Standards,” ed. Paul R. Sacket and Anne S. Mavors, National Academy of Sciences (2006), 1.

applicants in the AVF's recruiting pool. These variables fall in one of two circumstances; Army controlled circumstances and external circumstances. Army controlled circumstances involve what the Army can and has done in the past, for example, incentives such as increases in pay and benefits, and the easiest to implement, lower entrance standards. The other circumstances are due to macroeconomics; i.e. a good economy decreases the number of eligible people in the recruiting pool and a bad economy increases these numbers.

Affects of the Economy on Recruiting

The economy plays a major role in whether the AVF achieves its recruiting mission or not. An economic recession produces a higher unemployment rate, significantly increasing the size of the recruiting pool and allows the Army to be more selective in enlisting new recruits. Conversely, a booming economy produces more jobs, job security, and higher wages; thereby, increasing the demand for labor and shrinking the recruiting pool for military recruiters, forcing the Army to lower entrance standards to increase the recruiting pool; thereby potentially lowering the quality of the Army.

The inverse correlation between the economy, the Army's recruiting pool, and the effects on Army quality can be clearly identified by looking at Army recruiting since the inception of the AVF in 1973. The oil crisis in the 1970s caused an economic recession; however, the bad press of the Vietnam War, and the anti-war and anti-establishment environment of the late 1960s and early 1970s prevented people from viewing the newly established AVF as an opportunity. After the establishment of the AVF, the quality of recruits declined and the AVF had problems achieving its recruiting mission, giving draft advocates a rallying cry for the return of the draft.⁷⁵ Quality declined because in 1973, more than thirty percent of the recruits of the new AVF did not have a

⁷⁵ Barbara A. Bicksler, Curtis L. Gilroy and John T. Warner, *The All-Volunteer Force: Thirty Years of Service*. (Brassey's, Inc, 2004), 60.

high school diploma, which was higher than the national average.⁷⁶ For the Vietnam War, the nation provided nine million men for service; seven million were volunteers and the other two million were drafted. Of those seven million volunteers, almost eighty percent of enlisted Soldiers had high school diplomas; for the draftees, the percentage was even higher, while the average for the nation was only sixty-five percent for military-age youths.⁷⁷

In 1971, DoD realized that since conscription would no longer be the way to get troops, the Services would have to compete with civilian businesses for the available manpower. Competition with the civilian sector forced DoD to offer better benefits and incentives to attract people to the services. The initial changes made to facilitate the transition to the AVF were pay increases in the Defense Appropriations Acts of 1971 of 6.8 percent on 1 January 1971 and 14.2 percent on 14 November of that same year. The pay raises of 1972, 5.4 percent in January and six percent in October established military pay as “comparable” to civilian pay.⁷⁸ In 1980, General Edward C. Meyer, the Army’s Chief of Staff, informed Congress that he was in charge of “a hollow Army.”⁷⁹ Charles Moskos, testified to Congress that “the All-volunteer force is on the ragged edge of survival.” Fortuitously, through a combination of an economic recession, increases in basic pay, and improved recruiting techniques, quality and recruiting problems were remedied by the mid-1980s.⁸⁰

In 1980, President James E. Carter initiated the first significant change after the inception of the AFV that appealed to more people in the recruiting pool, by proposing an 11.7 percent pay raise. In the following year, President Reagan requested a 14.3 percent increase in basic pay. Early in

⁷⁶ Richard Halloran, “Military Recruiting Hurt by Tight Labor Market,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/08/01/us/military-recruiting-hurt-by-tight-labor-market.html> (accessed July 17, 2009).

⁷⁷ “Fact vs Fiction...The Vietnam Veteran,” <http://www.vvof.org/factsvvnv.htm> (accessed September 19, 2009).

⁷⁸ Richard O Helms, “Military Pay Comparability: The Industrial College of the Armed Forces,” National Defense University, (Washington, D.C.: 1993) <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA276610&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2009).

⁷⁹ Richard Halloran. “Military Recruiting Hurt by Tight Labor Market.”

⁸⁰ Ibid.

President Ronald W. Reagan's first term, a high rate of unemployment, particularly among young people, provided the impetus for people to flock to the military. For the military build up, President Reagan made the military even more attractive by allocating more money to family programs, housing, and medical care. The influence of the economy was illustrated in the fact that approximately ninety-one percent of new recruits had high school diplomas and eighty-nine percent attained average or higher on the AQFT. The dreadful job market of 1983 sent so many quality recruits to the military that "the ninety percent ratio of high school graduates became the benchmark" and recruits who did not have a high school diploma were ineligible to enlist unless they scored in the top fifty percent on the AQFT.⁸¹

In 1989, a New York Times headline read "Military Recruiting Hurt by Tight Labor Market." Richard Halloran reported that "specialists in military personnel say that as the labor market has grown tighter, it has become harder to enlist young people with high school diplomas and good scores on aptitude tests."⁸² This headline suggested a trend that when the economy was good, average and above average high school graduates entered college or the job market to meet labor demands.⁸³ At the beginning of the 1990s, the recruiting environment looked better because the military was downsizing after Desert Storm. However, in the mid 1990s, a combination of extraordinary economic growth, a thirty year low in unemployment, and historically high numbers of college bound high school graduates increased competition for qualified applicants in the recruiting pool creating recruiting problems for the military.⁸⁴ In March 2009, Curtis Gilroy, the Director for Accession Policy for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness told

⁸¹ Richard Halloran. "Military Recruiting Hurt by Tight Labor Market."

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Bicksler, Gilroy, and Warner, 106.

the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee that the Army usually experience an increase in enlistments of four to six percent when the national unemployment rate is about ten percent.⁸⁵

The Department of Defense established entrance standards to sift through the raw material of American citizenry to be converted into proficient Soldiers. The potential of each aspiring recruit is an unknown and the Army wants to increase its chances to produce the best Soldiers possible to ensure it is able to meet the nation's objectives when required. To produce the best Soldiers, the Army requires raw recruits it can efficiently and effectively shape into good Soldiers; i.e. to have a best product, start with quality raw material. By eliminating those people who will not make it through initial entry training (IET), the Army can save money.

Establishing Enlistment Standards

During World War I the United States Army had educational psychologists develop a recruit intelligence test. The educational psychologists developed an assortment of short-answer tests that were supposed to measure general intelligence. Due to the administration and the design of the test, critics condemned the test as flawed.⁸⁶ During World War II, the Army substituted the Alpha & Beta Tests with the Army General Classification Test (AGCT). The AGCT had 150 questions in three categories: vocabulary, math, and block counting. Over nine million recruits took the test and the results illustrated that only sixty-three percent of the recruits had a reading and writing level beyond the third grade level. In 1948, Congress passed a new Selective Service Act and directed DoD to develop a standardized screening test for all the services.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Curtis Gilroy, "Recruiting, Retention, and End Strength Overview," Testimony before the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, (March 2009), http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/MP030309/Gilroy_Testimony030309.pdf (accessed 20 October 2009).

⁸⁶ Microsoft Network, "U.S. Army Alpha Intelligence Test: Sample Questions," <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/RefMedia.aspx?refid=461550852&artrefid=761570026&sec=-1&pn=1> (accessed July 6, 2009).

⁸⁷ Rod Powers, "ABCs of the ASVAB: All About the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery," *About.com: US Military*, http://usmilitary.about.com/cs/joiningup/a/asvababcs_2.htm (accessed May 23, 2009).

To meet the Congressional mandate, DoD developed the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). The AFQT contained one hundred multiple-choice questions in the categories of vocabulary, arithmetic, spatial relations, and mechanical ability. For over twenty years, from 1950 to the mid 1970s, the AFQT was used to screen recruits, and each service was authorized to establish their entrance standards. The DoD developed a standardized military selection & classification test and administered it in U.S. High schools in the 1960s. The ASVAB was first used in 1968; however, it was not used for military recruiting at that time. In 1976, the ASVAB was launched as the authorized psychological testing battery for the military. The AFQT was still used to screen applicants; however, it was incorporated into the ASVAB.⁸⁸

The Department of Defense standards for entrance exams require a minimum of sixty percent in Categories I to III (best) and four percent Category 4, (worst). However, until 2004, the Active Army was using a higher standard of sixty-seven percent in Categories I-III, and two percent for Category IV. In 2005, due to shortages in recruiting, the Army expanded Category IV to the maximum ten percent and since the percentage is still within Defense Department guidelines, recruiting this segment of society does not constitute lowering Army entrance standards.⁸⁹

The AFQT percentiles were divided into five categories that indicate test score distribution. Recruits with high school diplomas that score in CAT I through IIIA, the top half, are considered high quality⁹⁰. High quality recruits are the most wanted recruits, because historical trends and studies indicate that recruits of this caliber are mostly likely to succeed in and complete training.

⁸⁸ Rod Powers, "ABCs of the ASVAB: All About the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery."

⁸⁹ Joseph Galloway, "Army Moves to Recruit More High School Dropouts," *Knight Ridder News Service, Miami Herald*, October 4, 2005, <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,78111,00.html> (accessed August 10, 2009).

⁹⁰ Kilburn, Hanser, and Klerman, "Estimating AFQT Scores for National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) Respondents," 6.

⁹¹AFQT scores specify which aspiring recruits are eligible for military service and facilitate decisions making in crafting an individual's enlistment.⁹²

Lowering of Standards

Eligibility for military enlistment is reliant upon a combination of age, education level, test scores, citizenship, health status, criminal record, and dependency status. Congress has mandated eligibility based on AFQT scores and recruits with scores in CAT V are ineligible for military service and only "a quarter of recruits can come from" CAT IV. Army operational recruiting standards are normally much higher than the minimum congressional standards."⁹³ However, the Army lowered standards to recruit sufficient forces for the Overseas Contingency Operations. In June 2005, David R. Sega, the director for the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland, stated, "The overall quality of the force today is lower than it was a year ago."⁹⁴

In January 2007, the National Gang Intelligence Center published a report that illustrated that recruiters, knowingly processed gang members into the military.⁹⁵ The need of the for recruits and the lowering of entrance standards have even gained the attention of the courts:

US criminal courts have allowed gang members to enter the service as an alternative to incarceration. Several incidences wherein gang members have been recruited into the armed services while facing criminal charges or on probation or parole have been documented. In many instances, a gang member facing criminal charges may be provided the option to join the military or serve a jail sentence.⁹⁶

Although using the Army to rehabilitate petty criminals may seem like a good idea that benefits the Army's end-strength, in the end it could actually be detrimental to good order and

⁹¹ Kilburn, Hanser, and Klerman, 6.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Eric Schmitt, "Army Recruiting More High School Dropouts to Meet Goals," *New York Times*, (New York, 2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/11/politics/11recruit.html> (accessed June 17, 2009).

⁹⁵ National Gang Intelligence Center, "Gang- Related activity in the US Armed Forces Increasing," (January 12, 2007), 8, http://militarytimes.com/static/projects/pages/ngic_gangs.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2008).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 7.

discipline; particularly to the unit that the receives the low quality recruit. Criminals joining the Army in lieu of prison, diminishes the professionalism of the force and runs counter to the Army values and culture.⁹⁷

Education

The data from the *2007 GED Testing Program Statistical Report* illustrates that more people are failing to graduate high school which decreases the number of fully qualified people in the Army's recruiting pool.⁹⁸ People without a high school diploma or a GED represent a huge part of the population that previously could not be exploited by military recruiters. This untapped segment of society equates to 3.7 million people between the ages of 16 and 24, according to the Department of Education. According to the *2007 GED Testing Program Statistical Report*, approximately eighteen percent of the U.S. adult population, thirty-nine million adults, have not earned a high school diploma and about 1.23 million students fail to graduate from high school each year. Lowering education and entrance standards creates a significant increase in the quantity of eligible people in the recruiting pool.⁹⁹

Gilroy testified that although obtaining recruiting goals were essential, it will have to be done with high and low quality recruits. The key is getting the right ratio, because the Army needs Soldiers that serve the full term of enlistment, perform well in training, and in the operational Army. He explained that the "quality" of the cohort is critical, and recruit quality was measure primarily by aptitude (ASVAB Scores) and educational attainment.¹⁰⁰ Of the Army new recruits in FY 2008, only 89% were High School Diploma Graduates (HSDG), which fell below the DoD benchmark of

⁹⁷ Jimmy L. Mcconico, "Ethical Imbalance: How the U.S. Army Overcame Its Manning Crisis," U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA. (March 2009), <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA500883&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (accessed 20 October 2009), 11.

⁹⁸ American Council on Education, "2007 GED Testing Program Statistical Report," (July 2008), vii, <http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ged/pubs/2007ASRfullreport.pdf> (accessed July 18, 2009).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gilroy, 3.

90%.¹⁰¹ Gilroy reminded Congress that only a small percentage of the American youth is fully qualified to enlist in the military.

About 35% are medically disqualified (with obesity a large contributing factor), 18% have problems with drugs or alcohol, 5% have some level of criminal misbehavior, 6% have more dependents than can reliably be accommodated in the early career, and 9% are in the lowest aptitude category. Another 10% are qualified, but are attending college. That leaves fewer than 5 million – or about 15% of the roughly 31 million youth ages 17-24 – who are available to recruit (25 percent including those in college).¹⁰²

In August 2008, the Army developed an educational program, the Army Preparatory School that allowed it to potentially acquire thousands of new recruits. The mission of Army Preparatory School, at Fort Jackson, S.C., is to assist young men and women who do not meet the education requirements to enter the service. The curriculum of the school consists of a four-week course to help men and women who did not obtain a regular high school diploma or GED certificate. The school will only accept applicants who score within the top fifty percentile on the ASVAB and also those applicants who are ineligible to return to high school and earn their diploma.¹⁰³

Project One Hundred Thousand

There have been two distinct times in recent history during which a large quantity of AFQT Category IV people joined the Army. The first period, lasted for three years from 1966 to 1969. It was a social experiment called Project One Hundred Thousand, which originated as a program in the War on Poverty.¹⁰⁴ In October 1966, DoD modified the entrance standards for military service and began accepting men who would have been disqualified because they failed mental standards or had easily correctable physical defects. These recruits were called "New Standards" men of which forty-

¹⁰¹ Gilroy, 4.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ John Harlow and Chris Rasmussen, "Army Opens Prep School at Fort Jackson," (August 4, 2008), <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/08/04/11441-army-opens-prep-school-at-fort-jackson/> (accessed June 15, 2009).

¹⁰⁴ Assistant Secretary of Defense, "Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of 'New Standards Men'," (Washington, D.C.: December 1969), vii, http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/reading_room/176.pdf (accessed June 15, 2009).

five percent were high school graduates and the median AFQT and reading level of “New Standards Men” was 13.6 and the sixth grade respectively.

The program allowed 100,000 “New Standards Men” in the military every year for three years. The Pentagon’s analysis of the project concluded that men allowed in under lower standards did not perform as well as those who met higher standards. The results were consistent in training attrition, performance ratings, promotions, disciplinary actions, and early separations. However, the differences were not significant and the Pentagon deemed the results as “acceptable when balanced against the military and social goals of the program.”¹⁰⁵

Previous Low Quality Recruits Affects

The second period, which is more applicable to this monograph, was the unintentional admittance of approximately 300,000 low quality recruits during the “misnorming of the ASVAB (1976-1980), which inflated AFQT scores in the below average range.” During this period, over thirty percent of the men and women who enlisted in the All-Volunteer Force were not high school graduates. The results during this misnorming period substantiated the results of Project One Hundred Thousand, that Category IV recruits, on average, when compared to higher quality Soldiers, had more basic training failures, punitive actions, lower Skill Qualification Test (SQT) scores, lower promotion rates, higher re-enlistment ineligibility, and higher attrition; similar to the results found in Project One Hundred Thousand.¹⁰⁶ However, there were “significant numbers” that met the standard.

The Link

A study conducted during Desert Shield/Storm established a link between low quality recruiting and operational performance. Four categories, Leadership in Battle, Task Proficiency,

¹⁰⁵ Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg, *Blacks in the Military*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1982), 90.

¹⁰⁶ Zook, 51.

Supervision, and Discipline were assembled out of twenty five rating criteria. The study found that “ASVAB scores...were significantly correlated with task proficiency and supervision” and that the “ASVAB Speed factor proved to significantly relate to leadership effectiveness in battle.”¹⁰⁷ The Soldier Performance Research Project (SPRP) resulted from a Congressional inquiry regarding the connection of AFQT levels to operational readiness and performance.

One test, in the SPRP project, to address whether or not there is a linkage between AFQT scores and operational readiness and performance was M1 tank gunnery. At Ft Knox, Kentucky, 547 trainees were tested in tank gunnery. The experiment found that Soldiers in the higher AFQT categories significantly outperformed Soldiers in Category IV.¹⁰⁸ The SPRP findings supported the ASVAB and AFQT predictors that low quality recruits can have a negative impact on a unit’s operational performance. The ASVAB and AFQT predictors of low quality recruits impacts were also substantiated by Project A.

Project A was developed by the Army Research Institute (ARI) and was DoD’s primary endeavor to comply with the Congressional directive to link “the entrance examination and job requirements to performance.”¹⁰⁹ Project A’s overall goal was:

To generate the criterion variables, predictor measures, analytic methods and validation data that [were] . . . necessary for developing an enhanced selection and classification system for all entry-level positions in the United States Army. (Campbell, 1990, p. 232). One of the most interesting aspects of Project A was that it focused not only on predicting training performance but also on post-training performance during the initial term of service, first-term attrition, the reenlistment decision, and even performance during the second term.¹¹⁰

The Project A research showed that the personality constructs measured by ABLE [Assessment of Background and Life Experiences] were predictive of enlisted performance and first-

¹⁰⁷ Zook, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 54. Soldiers in AFQT categories I and II hit sixty-seven percent of targets, while those in categories IV only hit fifty-three percent and were significantly slower. The results clearly demonstrated a decline in AFQT score had a corresponding decline in combat like performance.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Rostker, 596.

tour attrition . . . and that ABLE tapped qualities needed for successful performance that were captured by currently used screening tools [i.e., the ASVAB].¹¹¹

ASVAB scores and education level, play a major role in the “costs of recruiting, training, and force maintenance;” therefore, higher entrance standards generate higher costs, and produce higher performing Soldiers; while lower entrance standards produce lower costs and performance.¹¹²

Waivers

Since 1973, the Army has been an All-Volunteer Force; all Soldiers enter through the Army’s recruiting process. To enlist in the U.S. Army, all applicants, at a minimum must be a “U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, 17-41 years old, healthy and in good physical condition, in good moral standing, have a high school diploma or equivalent, scored at least a 31 on the ASVAB, and have the appropriate dependant status..¹¹³ When potential recruits cannot meet all of these requirements, they are ineligible for service; however, recruits can obtain an eligible status if they are granted a waiver.

The Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 is the proponent that has the authority to approve waivers for Army Regulation 601-270, Military Entrance Processing Station. “The proponent may delegate this approval authority, in writing, to a division chief with the proponent agency or its direct reporting unit or field operating agency, in the grade of colonel or the civilian equivalent.”¹¹⁴ If the Army consistently brings in low quality recruits, then there could potentially be a negative aggregate affect on the Army.

On 1 October 2008, DoD established waiver standards for all of the services. There are four waiver categories; drug, dependent, medical, and conduct. A drug waiver is required when a recruit

¹¹¹ Rostker, 597.

¹¹² Rostker, 601.

¹¹³ Departments of the Army, *Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)*, 5-14.

¹¹⁴ Department of the Army, *Military Entrance Processing Station, Army Regulation 601-270*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 23 March 2007), i.

tests positive for drugs or alcohol on the initial or subsequent Drug and Alcohol Test. A dependent waiver is required when a married recruit has two or more dependents under the age of 18 or an unmarried recruit has custody of two or more dependents under the age of 18. A medical waiver is required for any recruit that has a medical condition that is incompatible with AR 40-501, Chapter 2. A conduct waiver often referred to as a moral or criminal history waiver is required when a recruit discloses a criminal conviction or an ENAC reveals any convictions that falls within the categories of major misconduct, minor misconduct, or a pattern of misconduct. The Department of Defense has given the services the freedom to establish waiver polices that are more draconian than the DoD standards.¹¹⁵

Criminal Waivers

Every applicant is required by federal law reveal all criminal history during the entrance process, including juvenile records and any records that have been expunged or sealed. Non-disclosure or providing false information is a federal offense of which can result in a trial by federal, civilian, or military court.¹¹⁶ There are forty-three coded major misconduct offenses, felonies included, ranging from aggravated assault to terrorist and bomb threats. There are 33 minor misconduct offenses, ranging from fighting to discharging a firearm in public. A pattern of misconduct means that a recruit has a record of at least one minor offense and four non traffic offenses or five or more “non-traffic” offenses. There are 50 “non-traffic” offenses ranging from possession of fake identification to violation of leash laws.¹¹⁷

In testimony to Congress, Lieutenant Colonel Derek Contreras, Special Assistant for Personnel Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, admitted that DoD has not done well

¹¹⁵ United States Congress Congressional letter to Dr. David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness. April 21, 2008. <http://oversight.house.gov/documents/20080421104110.pdf> (accessed June 5, 2009).

¹¹⁶ Rod Powers, “Criminal History Waivers,” *About.com: US Military*, http://usmilitary.about.com/od/armyjoin/a/criminal.-u59_2.htm (accessed June 18, 2009).

¹¹⁷ David Chu, “Enlisted Waivers.”

with tracking approved personnel waivers of recruits who were convicted of felonies and that “due to poor recordkeeping and maintenance,” DoD is “unable to provide similar information for prior years regarding serious misdemeanors.”¹¹⁸ LTC Contreras provided data to Congress that showed the Army significantly increased the number of waivers granted for recruits with “felony convictions from 2006 to 2007. Army waivers increased from 249 waivers in 2006 to 511 waivers in 2007. The waiver increase included almost every type of felony offense.”¹¹⁹

In 2007, the Army approved waivers to recruits with convictions of aggravated assault, assault with a dangerous weapon, or maiming, all coded under serious misconduct. There were 248 waivers for recruits with burglary convictions, and 130 waivers for recruits with drug convictions, not including marijuana. Moreover, the Army approved waivers for “rape, sexual abuse, sexual assault, criminal sexual abuse, incest, or other sex crimes, indecent acts or liberties with a child, molestation, and terrorist threats and bomb threats.”¹²⁰ Henry Waxman, D-Rep, California, served as Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform from 2007 to 2008, expressed a concern that “the significant increase in the recruitment of persons with criminal records is a result of the strain put on the military by the Iraq war and may be undermining military readiness.”¹²¹

Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) provided the data that was primarily derived from United States Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) enlisted personnel data files of 520,972 new U.S. Army recruits during the period from 2000 to 2006. After restricting the sample to only to include Soldiers who were under the age of forty-two, were E-4s and below, and who had

¹¹⁸ Meeting between Lieutenant Colonel Derek Contreras, Special Assistant for Personnel Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), et al. and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Staff (January 10, 2008).

¹¹⁹ David Chu, United States Congress Congressional letter to Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, 1.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

contracted for three and four-year enlistments, 404, 646 remained in the sample. Subsequently, the sample only included Soldiers who had contracted for three and four-year enlistments resulting in a remainder 393,180 individuals.

In 2000, just 5.38 percent of newly enlisted recruits got conduct waivers; by 2006, conduct waivers increased to 12.36 percent; for the entire period, the average was 8.38 percent. Other studies had also demonstrated conduct waiver approval had increased since the beginning of the War on Terror.¹²² The results of earlier studies varied on the impact of conduct waivers and that suggested that conduct waivers were primarily tools to aid obtaining “recruiting goals in the short run at the cost of higher attrition in the long run.”¹²³ However, more recent studies suggest that conduct waivers might actually bring in Soldiers that perform well in combat.¹²⁴

Medical Waivers

The Department of Defense Directive 6130.3, Physical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, and Induction, and DoD Instruction 6130.4, Criteria and Procedure Requirements for Physical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction in the Armed Forces “directs the use of Army Regulation 40-501, Chapter 2 for medical qualifications for all branches of the Armed Forces, including the Coast Guard.”¹²⁵ The Accession Medical Standards Analysis and Research Activity (AMSARA) provided DoD with evidence-based evaluations of accession standards for 305,000 enlisted applicants in 2007.¹²⁶ About eleven percent of active duty applicants were

¹²² Christopher Distifeno, “Effects of Moral Conduct Waivers on First-term Attrition of US Army Soldiers,” (March 2008), 24. http://acquisitionresearch.net/_files/FY2008/NPS-HR-08-008.pdf (accessed August 10, 2009).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Rod Powers, “Military Medical Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, or Induction,” <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/intmedstandards.htm>. (accessed June 20, 2009).

¹²⁶ Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, “Accession Medical Standards Analysis & Research Activity 2008,” Annual Report.

originally ineligible for service due to permanently disqualifying medical conditions, and another ten percent were considered ineligible for conditions that could be remedied.¹²⁷

Such recruits, however, are less likely to ultimately become service-members, as approximately forty-five percent (2002-2006) of applicants with temporary disqualifications and forty-two percent (2002-2006) of applicants with permanently disqualifying conditions were subsequently accessed into active duty service, compared to seventy-two percent of fully qualified applicants. The same pattern was observed for 2007 applicants, though follow-up is not complete.¹²⁸

The two main reasons for temporary medical disqualifications in 2007 were overweight/bodyfat failures and drug use; primarily marijuana. The next common disqualifications were hearing loss and vision, both of which are permanent disqualifications.¹²⁹ Previous AMSARA studies have established that most medical discharges for conditions existing prior to service (EPTS) are for medical conditions that the applicant did not disclose. Consequently, the bypassing of accession medical standards, as opposed to the implementation of those standards, seems to be the main problem of EPTS discharges. The most common causes of EPTS discharges reported to USMEPCOM are psychiatric conditions, orthopedic conditions, and asthma. There is an increased risk of EPTS discharges for females, whites, recruits above the age of twenty, and those with lowest ASVAB scores.

ASVAB

An individual can take the ASVAB at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) or at one of the 14,000 high schools that participate in the ASVAB Career Exploration Program. The ASVAB has three different versions; the Computer Adaptive Test (CAT), the Student Test, and the MEPS test. Of the three, the most common is the CAT ASVAB. The CAT changes the difficulty of

¹²⁷ Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

the questions based on how the individual answered the question. For example, if the person answers the question correctly then the next question will be more difficult; correspondingly, if the individual answered incorrectly, the next question will be easier. Although people taking the test have a little more than two hours to complete the test, the average is about an hour and a half.¹³⁰

The ASVAB consists of nine subtests and each subtest generates its own score and the score of all the tests or a selection can be combined for a composite score. The results of each subtest and the ASVAB as a whole are a percentile, which measures how well an individual does in comparison to others who have taken the test. The critical composite score of the ASVAB is the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score. The AFQT score determines if the individual has passed the ASVAB and his or her military eligibility. The subtest that comprises the AFQT composite score are the Mathematics Knowledge, Arithmetic Reasoning, and Verbal (composite of Word Knowledge and Paragraph Comprehension multiplied by two), scores.¹³¹

The categories for the AFQT are Category I: the 93rd–99th percentile; Category II: 65th–92nd percentile; Category IIIA: 50th–64th percentile; Category IIIB: 31st–49th percentile; Category IV: 10th–30th percentile. Category IV is divided even further into Category IVA: 21st–30th percentile; Category IVB: 16th–20th percentile, and Category IVC: 10th–15th percentile. The lowest level is Category V: below the 10th percentile. The percentile score indicates the percentage of people who took the test who scored lower. For example, if an individual has a Category I score, then that individual performed better than ninety-three percent of the people who took the test. Congress, 10 U.S.C. 520, and DoD Directive 1145.1 have restrictions on military eligibility based on these scores; therefore, if an individual scores in CAT V, that person is ineligible for military service. People with Category IV scores are ASAVB failures who must be high school graduates in order to enlist in the military under severely restricted enlistment options. Additionally each branch of the

¹³⁰The ASVAB Study Guide, “What to Expect and How to Prepare,” <http://www.asvabprep.com/asvab-prep/> (accessed June 25, 2009).

¹³¹Ibid.

military has their own requirements for the minimum score that will be accepted. The services minimum passing AFQT Scores are Air Force 36; Coast Guard 36; Navy 35; Marines 32; and Army 31.¹³²

Impacts on the All-Volunteer Force

“The success of the All-Volunteer Force begins with recruiting, and its viability is ensured with successful retention.”¹³³ To produce the best Soldiers, the Army requires raw recruits it can efficiently and effectively shape into Soldiers who can perform their jobs well under a myriad of conditions. The premise is simple; to have a high quality product, start with high quality raw material. Recruits who can not perform well degrade the capabilities of their units. If by lowering the entrance standards, the number of numbers of low quality recruits becomes greater than or equal to high quality recruits then there can be a significant negative impact on the Army. Fortunately, the probability of that result is low because of high attrition of low quality recruits. However, high attrition of low quality recruits wastes, time, training resources, and money that could be used in the operational Army.

Failure to Serve First Term

The Army has consistently been concerned with recruits’ failure to serve their term. This kind of attrition is “disruptive, degrades unit performance, and wastes valuable training and recruiting resources.”¹³⁴ As mentioned previously, low quality recruits have traditionally had high attrition rates, when compared to high quality recruits, and as of 2009, about half fail to serve their first term of enlistment. As individuals, the attrition is negligible; however, collectively, first term attrition is costly to the Army by reducing the available workforce for deployment and diminishing

¹³² The ASVAB Study Guide.

¹³³ Gilroy, 2.

¹³⁴ M.C. Young and L.A. White, “Preliminary Operational Findings from the Army’s Tier Two Attrition Screen (TTAS) Measure,” (November 2006), 1.

the Army's pool of future Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs).¹³⁵ The Department of Defense limits the number of low quality recruits joining the Army, because of their potential negative impacts; however, they are usually cheaper to recruit, and some become good Soldiers.¹³⁶

The Department of Defense must recruit over 200,000 people every year to fulfill the manning requirements of all the services, including the reserves. The Army has the largest portion, 77,000 in 2004, 80,000 for 2005 to 2008, and for 2009 initially 80,000 now 65,000. Each recruit has an eight year obligation; however, the average enlistment contract is about four years; although contracts can range from two to six years, and the remaining time is served in the IRR. From 1982 to 1993, 31.7 percent of new DoD recruits failed to fully serve their first term. Of the 31.7 percent, eleven percent were separated within the first six months of their contract and the remaining 20.7 percent were separated between the 7th and 48th month.

This means that the Army is wasting millions of dollars every year training recruits that will not benefit the Army in the long run. It was estimated in 1998 that DoD training costs for each new recruit was approximately \$35,532. Using the estimated cost for 1993, DoD lost \$1.3 billion on 72,670 new recruits who left the service early, depriving the service a return on its investment. Historic statistical data shows that about one out of every three new enlistees fails to serve the full term of their contract and this rate has remained constant from 1986 to 1994 at a loss of \$1.3 billion a year.¹³⁷

DoD's data on reasons for early separations is deficient and does not clearly establish that low quality recruits are a significant portion of those separated early. However, for fiscal year 1993, more than seventy percent of male and females who "were separated between their 7th and 48th

¹³⁵M.C. Young and L.A. White, 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ United States Government Accounting Office, "Military Attrition DoD Needs to Follow Through on Actions Initiated to Reduce Early Separations," Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 2.

month of service were separated due to misconduct, medical/physical conditions, performance problems, parenthood, or drug use.”¹³⁸ Misconduct, performance problems, drug use, and medical/physical conditions, are categories for separation that corresponds with entrance standards that can be lowered or waived.

For the 1994 fiscal year, 25,430 Soldiers left the military before serving six months of the enlistment contract. Of the 25,430, low quality recruits represent eighty-three percent or 21,229 Soldiers who were separated due to being medically unqualified for military service, demonstrated character or behavior disorders, (all covered by waivers) fraudulently or erroneously entered the military, or failed to meet minimum performance criteria. These findings lead the GAO to conclude that the almost thirty-three percent attrition rate could be significantly reduced through better medical, physical, and criminal screening of recruits.¹³⁹

To reiterate, a “high quality” recruit is primarily based on the combination of education and AFQT score. A high quality recruit is one who scores at or above the 50th percentile on the AFQT (Categories I-III A), and who is Tier 1 (has a regular high school diploma or better). DoD strives to have all high quality recruits because they are more likely to complete contract enlistment terms, perform better in training, and on the job.¹⁴⁰

Approximately 200,000 new enlisted recruits are needed annually for DoD to sustain about 1.14 million enlisted men and women. DoD has quantitative and qualitative recruiting goals. Until 2006 DoD's standard stipulated that at least sixty-seven percent of new recruits had to be high quality. Since then, DoD has lowered the qualitative standard to sixty percent to ease the recruiting burden. The modification of the standard allowed the Army to meet its recruiting goals at a slight cost of quality, as illustrated by 2007 “high quality” rate of 60.8 percent and 2008 rate of 62.1

¹³⁸ GAO, “Military Attrition DoD Needs to Follow Through on Actions Initiated to Reduce Early Separations,” 7.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

percent¹⁴¹. In 2005, 56.2 percent of the Army was considered high quality; however, in 2006, the percentage fell to 46.6 percent, and slid again to 44.6 percent in 2007. There was a slight increase to 45.3 percent in 2008.¹⁴²

Retention

As long as the U.S. maintains the AVF as the vehicle to supply Soldiers for the Army, then the Army will continue to face “challenges in recruiting and retaining quality enlisted soldiers.”¹⁴³ The high operational tempo and the stress of multiple deployments will cause many soldiers to leave. In the long run, the Army’s failure to retain sufficient numbers of quality Soldiers will have a negative impact on Army operational readiness and performance.¹⁴⁴

Retention denotes the military’s ability to get service members to continue serving the country in uniform. Continuation rates convey the proportion of service members who remain in the military for a specific period.¹⁴⁵ Once a service member nears the end of his contract, he can continue and leave the military, extend the contract, or reenlist. A general retention concern is that not enough personnel with the desired skills and experience will remain in the military, thereby creating a shortage of experienced personnel, decreased military efficiency, and negatively impacting the Army.¹⁴⁶

CBO checked retention rates in three categories: initial enlistments, mid-career, and careerists. The Army achieved its retention goals in all three categories every year from 2000 to 2005; however, the Army missed retention goals in the first quarter of FY 2005. The CBO found

¹⁴¹ National Priorities Project, “Military Recruitment 2008: Significant Gap in Army’s Quality and Quantity Goals,” www.nationalpriorities.org/militaryrecruiting2008, (accessed June 16, 2009).

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Kevin Beerman, “Increasing Army Retention Through Incentives,” USAWC Strategy Research Project, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/ksil276.pdf> (accessed September 19, 2009).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ CBO, “The Impact of Recruiting and Retention on Future Army End-Strength: An Interim Report,” 7.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

that if accession levels and continuation rates from 2005 were sustained to 2010, the Army's force level would decrease. The Army is increasing its end strength to 512,400 Soldiers. To this accomplish goal; the Army has to sustain rates that have not been sustained for more than two years over the past twenty years.¹⁴⁷

CBO studied trends in continuation rates and discovered that in 2004 and 2005 the Army's overall continuation rates were lower than they had been since 1996. Additionally, continuation rates for initial enlistees at the fourth year of service were lower in 2005 than in either 2000 or 2001 and even lower than they had been since the early 1990s. Regardless of pay increases and the use of stop-loss, continuation rates declined to levels not seen in more than 10 years. According to CBO's estimates, that without stop-loss, continuation rates would have been even lower than 2005 rates.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, because of end-strength issues, some personnel were retained that would have been put out, before the war.

In May 2005, the Army distributed a memo concerning unit attrition and behaviors that will no longer fit the criteria for chaptering Soldiers out of the Army. The memo addressed the problem of recruiters working hard to meet recruiting goals and bring in low quality recruits and commander's working just as hard to put them out due to poor performance.¹⁴⁹ Limiting commander's ability to remove poor performing Soldiers from the Army, allowed the number of poor performing Soldier's to grow; collectively, degrading the Army's operational readiness and performance.

The Army's has long had the "up or out" mindset when it came to retention. "Up or Out" is a phrase to sum up the Army's Qualitative Management Program, commonly referred to as Retention Control Points (RCP). Retention Control Points were designed to encourage Soldiers to get promoted within a certain time

¹⁴⁷ CBO, 7.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Jimmy L. Mcconico, "Ethical Imbalance: How the U.S. Army Overcame Its Manning Crisis," U.S. Army War College (Carlisle Barracks, PA. March 2009), <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA500883&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (accessed 20 October 2009), 12.

frame or leave the Army. In December 2008, the *Army Times* reported the RCP for Private through Private First Class had changed from three years to eight years.¹⁵⁰ Although this keeps more Soldier in uniform, it also keeps more low quality Soldiers in the Army and allows their number to increase. By adding five years to the RCP, the Army may be asking for five years of lackadaisical attitude and poor performance to its operations.¹⁵¹

Mitigating Programs

Since the inception of the AVF in 1973, the Army has learned that to get high-quality recruits, it had to establish systems and processes that translate the advantages and opportunities of being a Soldier to the average civilian. Reaching “John Q public” was achieved using suitable marketing strategies and programs offering money for college, bonuses for enlisting in specific MOS’s, and bonuses based upon length of enlistment tours. The Army illustrated the link of Army service and civilian employment through standardized school training or on the job training; the skills learned and the values developed could be valuable to the civilian market. Additionally, the Army focused on quality of life initiatives. In the AFV, Soldiers are more motivated if they have good pay, adequate housing, child care, and healthcare benefits.¹⁵² All of these systems and processes combine to create a synergy that mitigates the impact of low quality recruits on the Army.

Congressional and DoD Directives

U.S. law and DoD directives are the first tools that are used to mitigate low quality recruits negative impact on the Army. As mentioned previously, Congress has stipulated that no recruits can come from the lowest ten percent of the population distribution of AFQT scores and that only a quarter of recruits can come from the 10th to 30th percentiles.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Jim Tice, “Up or Out’ Rules Eased,” *Army Times* (December 1, 2008), 10.
http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/12/army_uporoutrules_120108w/ (accessed October 21, 2009).

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Rostker.

¹⁵³ Kilburn, Hanser, and Klerman, “Estimating AFQT Scores for National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) Respondents,” ch. 2.

Recruiting, Advertising, and Marketing

In April 2009, Brig. Gen. Joseph Anderson, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, said, “The service plans to cut 1,100 active duty, Reserve and contract recruiters over the next two years.” This is potentially a huge mistake, because the recent rise in recruiting and recruit quality was largely dependent upon the capricious character of the economy. Gilroy also suggested that, to decrease costs, the easiest and quickest route is to cut recruiting budgets; however, when the recruiting environment gets tough again, it will be “time consuming and expensive” to surge on recruiting.¹⁵⁴ Recruiting, advertising, and marketing budgets should be maintained if not increased in order to continue to attract an appropriate number of recruits to meet recruiting missions.

Additionally, attracting high quality recruits helps to offset the impact of lower quality recruits. The Army’s advertising and marketing sole purpose is to facilitate recruiting efforts by inspiring young Americans to join the Army. Additionally, advertising and marketing will also get parents, teachers, educational administrators, the influencers of young Americans, to view the Army as a positive opportunity. Every year, the Army spends billions on advertising to communicate and inform the nation of the Army’s story and to reach and compel potential Soldiers to join the Army.

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Financial Incentives

"You can't keep people in the service with any amount of money if they don't like military life," said Robert L. Goldich of the Congressional Research Service, "but you can drive them out by not paying them enough."¹⁵⁶ Several studies have shown the sensitivity of enlistment and

¹⁵⁴ Ann Scott Tyson, “Army More Selective as Economy Lags,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/18/AR2009041801992.html> (accessed July 28, 2009).

¹⁵⁵ United States Army, “New Recruitment Advertisement Campaign,” http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/launch/downloads/campaign_launch.ppt (accesses August 15, 2009).

¹⁵⁶ Halloran, “Military Recruiting Hurt by Tight Labor Market.”

reenlistment rates to economic factors.¹⁵⁷ The sensitivity of enlistment and reenlistment to the economy required that the market be constantly monitored. In 1976, Congress removed G.I. Bill benefits during an economic downturn and the results were a significant decline in recruit quality and enlisted retention. Through good and bad economic times, the DoD has learned that recruiting recovered as the services responded with higher base pay, bonuses, and or special pays when packaged with other mitigating programs.¹⁵⁸

Educational Incentives

The variable composition and waning size of the youth recruiting pool have placed a premium on looking closely at how low aptitude personnel have performed in the Army. The success of the Army Reserve and National Guard (ARNG) GED Plus program and the potential of the Army Preparatory School illustrates that the Army can develop training and education programs that can mitigate the impact of low quality recruits.¹⁵⁹ Civilian education can be a huge attractor for the military; high school graduate looking for money for college, college graduates searching for school loan pay back, and Soldiers seeking to increase promotion potential and to improve themselves.

Educational benefits ranged from \$60,000 for a 4-year enlistment to \$15,000 for a 15-month enlistment (implemented as a pilot program in October 2003).¹⁶⁰ Across all universities that participated, shorter terms had a notably positive effect on enlistment propensity. Twenty-three percent of those participating in the survey indicated an enlistment propensity for the 15- month

¹⁵⁷ Warner and Asch (1995); Warner, Simon, and Payne (2001).

¹⁵⁸ Bicksler, Gilroy, and Warner, 63.

¹⁵⁹ George Casey, "2009 Army Posture Statement," http://www.army.mil/aps/09/2009_army_posture_statement_web.pdf (accessed June 29, 2009).

¹⁶⁰ United States Army Recruiting Command, "15-Month Army Enlistment Option Available Nationwide," <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/download/15-monthpercent2005-05.pdf>, (accessed September 20, 2009).

option (with \$15,000 in educational benefits), but only two percent were inclined to favor the 4-year option (with \$60,000 in educational benefits).¹⁶¹

The October 2004 survey at Northwestern even asked if students would consider serving as prison guards in places like Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo if their student loans were forgiven and they received G.I. Bill benefits for graduate school. Eleven percent said that such service would be a “very likely” option; another eighteen percent said they would “consider” such an option. Two-thirds of American high-school graduates now go on to some form of higher education. Of these, about half will graduate with a bachelor’s degree.¹⁶²

Each year, 1.2 million young people graduate with a bachelor’s degree, yet military recruitment of college graduates at the enlisted level is minuscule. The average college graduate today leaves with about \$19,000 in debt. Forty percent of college graduates state they intend to go on to some form of graduate study. A higher percentage of youth now go on to graduate school than went to undergraduate schools during the post-World War II years of the original G.I. Bill. The average debt of a student who attends graduate school is \$38,000.¹⁶³

Quality of Life Benefits

The Army also committed to a five-year, \$50 million study by the National Institute for mental health for practical interventions for mitigating suicides and enhancing Soldier resiliency. The Army also has provided better access to quality healthcare, enhanced dental readiness programs focused on Reserve Component Soldiers, improved Soldier and family housing, increased access to child care, and increased educational opportunities for Soldiers, their children, and spouses.¹⁶⁴ The biggest news is the Post-9/11 GI Bill that became effective on August 1, 2009. “The post 9/11 GI Bill provides the most comprehensive educational

¹⁶¹ Charles C. Moskos, “Saving the All-Volunteer Force,” *Military Review* (May -June 2005): 6. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0PBZ/is_3_85/ai_n13824958/ (accessed June 23, 2009).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ George Casey, “2009 Army Posture Statement,” http://www.army.mil/aps/09/2009_army_posture_statement_web.pdf (accessed June 29, 2009).

benefits to service-members since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944.” What makes the post 9/11 G.I. Bill more valuable than the previous Montgomery G.I. Bill it provides money for “education and housing to qualified service-members,” and the best part is the that the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits can be transferred to family members..¹⁶⁵

Training

Advertising, recruiting, financial and educational incentives, healthcare benefits, training, and traveling, attract high quality, as well as low quality recruits. While no low quality recruits would be preferable, it is unrealistic. Understanding this aspect and with thirty-six years of experience recruiting in up and down economies, peace and war, and waxing and waning defense budgets, the Army has developed tasks, conditions and standards (TCS) to mitigate low quality recruits affect on the Army.

Tasks, conditions, and standards allow the Army to develop training that will get low quality recruits to perform almost on par with high quality recruits. The Army’s training revolution in the mid-1970s developed with systemizing TCS, and codifying the systems approach to training in doctrine. “To shape today's Army and the future combat force,” Training and Doctrine Command “builds the Army on a solid foundation of quality people by transforming recruits into Soldiers - Soldiers who are physically tough, mentally adaptive and live the Warrior Ethos. Soldiers are our ultimate asymmetric advantage and cannot be matched by our adversaries, current or future.”¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

In the past, it was taken for granted that high quality recruits make the best Soldiers and that low quality recruits degrade the quality of the Army. This conclusion seems to be supported by the results of studies conducted by US Army Research Institute, RAND, CBO, and studies conducted to validate the predictive capabilities of ASVAB and AFQT scores. The Army’s recruiting and

¹⁶⁵ Department of Veterans Affairs, http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Post-911.htm.

¹⁶⁶ United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, “Commanding General’s Vision.” <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/about.htm> (accessed 12 September 2009).

retention programs significantly impact its capability to maintain the end strength need to sustain current operations. The metric used to determine if the Army can sustain operation is the attainment of end strength goals with Soldiers, who can adequately perform in combat; therefore, the operational readiness and performance of the Army is directly influenced by the quality of new recruits.¹⁶⁷ Studies have shown that recruits who are better educated or who score higher on aptitude tests are more likely to be better Soldiers who enhance the capabilities of their units.¹⁶⁸

The study conducted during Desert Shield/Storm found that “ASVAB scores... were significantly correlated with task proficiency and supervision” and that the “ASVAB Speed factor proved to significantly relate to leadership effectiveness in battle.”¹⁶⁹ The SPRP resulted from a Congressional inquiry regarding the connection of AFQT levels to operational readiness and performance also found that Soldiers in the higher AFQT categories significantly outperformed Soldier in Category IV in combat like situations and scenarios.¹⁷⁰ Like SPRP, Project A findings substantiated the ASVAB and AFQT predictors that low quality recruits can have a negative impact on a unit’s operational performance.¹⁷¹

Army operational readiness is the Army’s ability to meet the demands of the nation's military strategy and it is dependent upon unit readiness. Unit readiness is “derived from the ability of each unit to deliver the outputs for which it was designed,” and ultimately, Soldiers provide the unit’s capability.¹⁷² The Army’s operational performance is defined as the Army units’ performance

¹⁶⁷ United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, “Commanding General’s Vision.”

¹⁶⁸ CBO, “The Impact of Recruiting and Retention on Future Army End-Strength,” 1.

¹⁶⁹ Zook. *Soldier Selection: Past, Present, and Future*, 53.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 54. Soldiers in AFQT Categories I and II hit sixty-seven percent of targets, while those in categories IV only hit fifty-three percent and were significantly slower. The results clearly demonstrated a decline in AFQT score had a corresponding decline in combat like performance.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² DoD, Dictionary of Military Terms, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddic/dict/data/r/6522.html> (accessed October 19, 2009).

measured against standards and their ability to effectively and efficiently achieve objectives, when executing defensive, offensive, support, and/or stability operations.

ASVAB scores and education level, play a major role in the “costs of recruiting, training, and force maintenance;” therefore, higher entrance standards generate higher costs, and produce higher performing Soldiers; while lower entrance standards produce lower costs and performance.¹⁷³ Viewing the matriculation of a recruit from recruitment through the institutional Army to the operational Army as a system clearly illustrates how low quality recruits can negatively impact the Army. New recruits, as raw material are the inputs of the institutional Army. The institutional Army is the processing component of the system where the recruits are trained, educated, and molded into Soldiers. The institutional Army’s products are Soldiers which are the inputs to the operational Army. The performance of Soldiers during Army operations, collectively corresponds to the Army’s operational performance.¹⁷⁴

In times of war, bringing in very large numbers of recruits may require lowering entrance standards. Lowering entrance standards does create a significant increase in the number of applicants in the recruiting pool. People without a high school diploma or a GED represent a huge part of the population that previously could not be exploited by military recruiters. This untapped segment of society equates to 3.7 million people between the ages of 16 and 24, according to the Department of Education and there are about 1.23 million students that fail to graduate from high school each year.¹⁷⁵

However, the Army has developed processes and systems to try to bring low quality recruits on par with high quality recruits over the long run. Research suggests that low quality recruits have a negative impact on the Army’s readiness and operational performance primarily in the short term,

¹⁷³ Rostker, 601

¹⁷⁴ Frank A. Camm, Cynthia R. Cook and Ralph Masi, “What the Army needs to Know to Align its Operational and Institutional Activities,” (RAND Corporation, 2007), 3.

¹⁷⁵ American Council on Education, “2007 GED Testing Program Statistical Report,” vii

i.e. within the there first four five years of service, put with continued service, low quality recruits get better. Major General Thomas P. Bostick, Commander U.S. Army Recruiting Command has stated that the Army is continuing to investigate if low quality recruits can equate to high quality recruits over time. The research indicates that the Army has been fairly successful at mitigating the negative impact of low quality recruits on the All-Volunteer Force through professional military education, high quality training and standards.

Additionally, significant increases in pay, healthcare, benefits and other incentives will attract high quality recruits and motivate low quality recruits to excel. These mitigating factors appear to be working. MG Bostick, has conducted a study commonly called, “The Army’s 17,000 Soldier Study,” that indicates that low quality recruits do not have the negative impact as was previously thought. The study compares the performance trends of low quality recruits to high quality recruits over a three year period, 2003-2006. The study discovered that when the performance of Soldiers without waivers is compared to the performance of 17,000 Soldiers admitted with conduct waivers found that those with the waivers had “somewhat” higher misconduct rates, slightly more losses due to misconduct, but had “lower loss rate in entry level performance and unsatisfactory performance.”¹⁷⁶ Additionally, these Soldiers with conduct waivers also had a higher reenlistment rate, “advanced to the rank of sergeant faster, and had a higher ratio of valorous awards.”¹⁷⁷ Despite the fairly positive results of the “17,000 Soldier Study,” studies conducted by US Army Research Institute, RAND, and CBO suggests that low quality recruits do have a negative impact on the All-Volunteer Force.

Conversely, as long as the number of low quality recruits remains low in proportion to high quality recruits the negative impact of low quality recruits on the All-Volunteer Force can be

¹⁷⁶ Thomas P. Bostick, “17,000 Soldier Study,” Statement before the Federal Workforce Subcommittee Oversight and Reform Committee, House of Representatives (June 10, 2008), <http://federalworkforce.oversight.house.gov/documents/20080610164915.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

mitigated. During times of war or conflict, the Department of Defense will have to make adjustments in order to sustain the All-Volunteer Force and the adjustment will include lower quality personnel. The key will be the appropriate combination of high and low entrance standards that leverages the benefits and costs of high quality recruits against the handicaps of low quality recruit.

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