

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**RECRUITING 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY ARMY WARRIORS: A TASK REQUIRING NATIONAL  
ATTENTION**

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States initiated combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and thus began the Global War on Terror. More than five years later the United States Army is still heavily engaged in combat operations in both countries. In the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, one of the underpinnings of the strategy states that victory will take time. In light of this strategy and the realities we see today, many have referred to our current efforts as the “long war.” In the midst of the “long war” the U.S. Army must continue to recruit young men and women to serve in the Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This project examines three critical factors in recruiting these future warriors: the declining propensity to enlist in military service, the impact of a strong economy, and the dwindling pool of eligible Americans to enlist. The research reveals that a national solution is necessary to recruit enough young men and women for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Army. Recommendations are provided to reverse current trends in enlistment propensity and to energize the country’s lawmakers and the Department of Defense to assist in keeping the “Army Strong.”



## RECRUITING 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY ARMY WARRIORS: A TASK REQUIRING NATIONAL ATTENTION

Our own generation is in a long war against a determined enemy.

—President George W. Bush<sup>1</sup>

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States initiated combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and thus began the United States' Global War on Terror. More than five years later the United States Army is still heavily engaged in both combat and stability operations in both countries. Given the magnitude of the problems to establish security, rebuild infrastructure, and bolster fledgling governments in these two countries, our efforts will take a considerable amount of time to achieve victory. In the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, one of the underpinnings of the strategy is that victory will take time and we will have to stay in Iraq as long as necessary to achieve this victory.<sup>2</sup> In light of our strategy and the realities we see today, many, to include the Bush Administration, have referred to our current efforts as the "long war."<sup>3</sup> In the midst of this "long war" the U.S. Army is facing tremendous challenges in meeting its current global commitments and posturing to remain the world's premier fighting force. To do this the Army must continue to recruit high quality young men and women to serve in the Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Faced with the reality of a "long war" and no current provision for a conscript Army, the Army must meet its personnel end-strength goals under the auspices of the all-volunteer Army. This is uncharted territory for the Army since it has never had to face a long, drawn out war requiring large numbers of troops without the benefit of some level of mobilization. In 1917 President Woodrow Wilson convinced Congress to approve the draft policy after the United States declared war on Germany and Austria at the onset of World War I, and it remained in effect during World War II, the Korean War, and most of the Vietnam War. The draft policy was only reversed during the latter stages of the Vietnam War under President Richard Nixon.<sup>4</sup> While for the past 33 years the Army has successfully relied upon its recruiting initiatives and programs to man the force and maintain its end-strength, it also has not been faced with a kinetic conflict of any considerable duration. The situation today is different. As mentioned previously, the Army is now treading on new ground as it attempts to maintain its end-strength in an uncertain strategic security environment highlighted by the War on Terror that continues to inflict casualties and requires the deployment of hundreds of thousands of troops.

The Chief of Staff of the Army succinctly captured this situation in an email to the leadership on 17 October 2005 that outlined his top three priorities for the Army. His priorities

were to “Win the long war while sustaining the all-volunteer force, recruit and retain soldiers, while providing a quality of life commensurate with the quality of their service.”<sup>5</sup> To further complicate matters, newly appointed Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently recommended to President Bush a proposal to increase the end-strength of the Army by 65,000 soldiers over the next five years.<sup>6</sup> Despite these challenges, our nation still demands an Army that can fight and win our nation’s wars. Can the Army meet this demand in the 21<sup>st</sup> century solely with volunteer warriors?

This paper examines four critical factors adversely affecting the recruitment of these future warriors. First, there is the issue of declining propensity to enlist in the Army. Specifically, the impact of the “long war” and the duration and frequency of deployments coupled with the media’s coverage of the war are tarnishing the appeal of military service. Propensity to enlist is also adversely affected by the parents of potential enlistees that are playing a major role in encouraging their kids not to enlist. Second, the generational characteristic of the young Americans the Army is attempting to recruit makes them less likely than previous generations to want to enlist. Third, the impact of a strong economy and job market provide numerous alternatives to military service. With relatively zero unemployment and very competitive wages for entry-level jobs, the Army continues to compete with a healthy civilian job market to hire quality recruits. Fourth, the pool of eligible Americans to enlist is dwindling. Many potential enlistees are disqualified from military service due to poor health, lack of education, or previous criminal activity. All of these factors reveal that unless the country’s lawmakers and the Department of Defense take action, an all-volunteer Army may not meet the nation’s needs because of its inability to recruit enough qualified young men and women to sustain its current end-strength, much less a proposed growth. However, there are some potential solutions to counter these growing concerns and this paper will examine some of them.

Maintenance of adequate recruitment levels is essential for the Army and our nation. From 1980 to 1991 the Army successfully replaced its annual personnel losses on a one-for-one basis.<sup>7</sup> This one-for-one policy changed after 1991 as the Army began its post-Cold War drawdown. The Army chose not to replace its annual losses on a one-for-one basis and intentionally lowered its recruiting objectives as part of the drawdown plan to decrease the overall end-strength of the Army.<sup>8</sup> Essentially the Army said “We are not hiring.” However, after the Army completed its drawdown in the late 1990s it was faced with the challenge of once again replacing its losses on a one-for-one basis. In raw numbers this equated to an annual recruiting mission of between 70,000 and 80,000 new recruits to maintain steady state end-strength. In Fiscal Year 98 and 99 the Army failed to meet its recruiting goals and soon realized

that maintaining steady state was not going to be easy.<sup>9</sup> In addition to failing its recruiting mission, the Army also realized that the attitudes of young Americans towards enlistment was getting worse.

### Declining Propensity

The propensity or tendency to enlist in the Army among eligible young men and women steadily declined from 1980 through 1999 and that trend continues today. The 1999 Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS), a study that had been conducted annually since 1975 to measure youth enlistment propensity, painted a bleak outlook for recruiting and indicated the Department of Defense would have to take additional measures to address its recruiting challenges.<sup>10</sup> Youth surveys from 1980 to 1999 showed that the number of young people saying they were not willing to serve in the military had increased over time from 40 percent to over 60 percent.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, after 2000 the Army stopped using the YATS and there is currently no broad-based study to measure youth propensity. While the Army was able to meet its recruiting goals from 2000 to 2004, it did so by lowering quality standards, increasing enlistment bonuses and getting residual help through military pay increases.<sup>12</sup> None of these measures were aimed at reversing downward trends in propensity, but rather were only quick fixes to meet immediate needs. The inadequacies of these quick fixes came to light in 2005 when the Army failed its recruiting mission again. This time, however, the consequences are more drastic as there appears to be no end in sight to the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2005, the active Army recruiting effort fell 6,600 recruits short of its goal to enlist 80,000 new soldiers. This decline surfaced for a variety of reasons. First, the impact of “the long war” was and is having a noticeable effect on enlistment propensity and current recruiting efforts. As the Army continues the fight against terrorists, it is maintaining a tremendous deployment tempo and casualties continue to rise. The National Security Advisory Group chaired by former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry reports the strain and stress on the Army as a result of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan is “highly corrosive”<sup>13</sup> and will have a long-term effect on the Army to remain a viable force. Specifically, the group expects the Army’s recruiting shortfall to be far larger this year if public support for the war in Iraq continues to decline as well as the propensity of young Americans eligible to serve.<sup>14</sup> The physical reality of war is contributing to negative attitudes about military service. The media, by the nature of its reporting on the physical realities of war, is also contributing to this decline in propensity.

Daily media coverage announcing casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan paint a dismal picture of the fighting in each country. In an information age where the accessibility of the

Internet and other media sources are omnipresent, enlistment age Americans have the war placed in front of them every day. As Dr. Barbie Zelizer from the Annenberg School of Communication explains, “Journalism’s images of war disturb. Among the most powerful visuals known to humankind, they are haunted by the stubborn inevitability and proximity of death.”<sup>15</sup> The constant barrage of negative images about the war is feeding the momentum to avoid the Army. The research firm Millward Brown concluded in an Army sponsored study that objections to the war, casualties and media coverage of negative events such as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal all took a toll on recruiting efforts. The study specifically mentioned that objections to the Iraq situation and aversion to the military were two primary reasons why today’s youths are not considering military service as a career choice.<sup>16</sup>

However, negative images on television are not the only media source impacting youth propensity to enlist. Congressional leaders are also dissuading recruiting efforts through their media encounters. For example, Representative John Murtha, a decorated Vietnam combat veteran, told ABC’s Nightline interviewer John Donovan that in view of the war in Iraq he himself would not join the military today.<sup>17</sup> His position was shared by his close congressional ally, newly elected House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. How can we expect young people to consider the military as a career option or any form of national service when two of the countries leaders would not?

If the media’s coverage of the “long war” and the war’s critics are cause for concern for recruiting efforts, so is the impact that parents are now having on youth propensity to enlist. Parents, as the primary influencers of potential enlistees, are not recommending military service to their children. As recently reported, “With the ongoing war in Iraq, many parents have been skeptical about the benefits of enlisting in the military...”<sup>18</sup> This should not be taken lightly as a study from Purdue University concludes that, “Parents have a critical influence on the career aspirations of their sons’ and daughters’. They provide the encouragement and validation of their children’s life ambitions and career decisions.”<sup>19</sup> Today’s cohort of potential enlistees was raised by active, involved parents who ensured their children were protected, grew up safely, and were treated well. Not surprisingly, these young adults tend to like and listen to their parents when it comes to making career choices. In fact, a Generation 2001 survey indicated that parents were most often named when young people were asked whom they admired.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the Army is not only faced with the challenge of countering negative attitudes of potential enlistees but also convincing parents that the Army is acceptable for their children. Many parents around the country are terrified that their children would be killed, or have to kill, in a war that many see as unnecessary and without end.<sup>21</sup> Not only are parents discouraging their



children from serving, but in many high schools, they are insisting that recruiters be kept away from their children. The Army and the other services are “vexed by a generation of more activist parents who have no qualms about projecting their own views onto their children.”<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, a Department of Defense survey in November 2004 indicated that only 25% of parents would recommend military service to their children, down from 42% in August 2003.<sup>23</sup>

The Army is battling to overcome the influence of parents and their negative attitudes toward recommending military service through advertising. To counter the negative effects of parents on recruiting the military began running television ads in April 2005 that intentionally targets parents in order to boost the number of new recruits. The \$350 million ad campaign has tripled the visibility of television spots targeting parents. To capitalize on this momentum the Army also recently unveiled a new advertising campaign. The Army Strong campaign was designed to address the interests and motivations of those considering a career in the Army, but more importantly it will also speak to family members and friends supporting prospective recruits.<sup>24</sup> All of these efforts are intended to reach parents in light of counter-recruiting campaigns that are barring recruiters from gaining access to some campuses.

### The Millennial Generation

Generational attitudes also negatively impact the Army’s recruiting efforts. The majority of the young men and women the Army seeks to recruit today are often referred to as the “Millennial Generation.” Born between 1980 and 2000, the Millennials form the cohort group of choice for recruiting efforts for today and the next decade.<sup>25</sup> They also form the major pool of laborers to replace the Baby Boomer Generation. With such a large number of Baby Boomers approaching retirement eligibility, the Millennials are and will continue to be a hot commodity for the labor market. Competition with the civilian labor market, which will be discussed later, is not the only challenge to recruiters. Recruiters also have to overcome some of the characteristics of the Millennials in order to attract them to military service.

First, Millennials have been sheltered for much of their life. As a result Millennials are security conscious. According to a survey conducted by Neil Howe, best-selling author, speaker and authority on different generations, 84 percent of Millennials say physical security, or a safe environment, is very important.<sup>26</sup> Given the nature of the profession, it is difficult for the Army to market a safe environment to convince Millennials to enlist. Second, Millennials are also characterized as planners, or committed to long-term goals. He estimates that 88 percent of Millennials surveyed have specific five-year career goals that are focused on gaining education and not entertaining the immediate employment opportunities such as those offered by the

military.<sup>27</sup> Third, Millennials feel pressured to attend college and are placing increasingly more value on obtaining higher education upon completion of high school. This is perhaps the greatest characteristic to overcome. Howe estimates that an unprecedented number of Millennials plan to go to college after high school—84 percent in 2002 with 66 percent of whom plan on attending a four-year institution.<sup>28</sup> In the State of College Admission Report for 2006, the report states that the path to postsecondary education continues to widen for American students. A population wave of students has fueled record numbers of high school graduates and students enrolled in postsecondary education. The report goes on to predict that college enrollments are expected to increase until at least 2014.<sup>29</sup> As more and more Millennials pursue college opportunities, the population traditionally targeted by recruiters, high school graduates, will continue to dwindle. These characteristics are alarming because they indicate another degree of difficulty for future recruiting efforts. As alluded to earlier, Army recruiters will not only have to overcome these generational challenges, but be faced with much greater competition from the civilian labor market.

### A Strong Economy

The U.S.'s strong domestic and international economy continues to draw high quality young men and women away from military service. There are simply a wide variety of job opportunities and alternatives to military service available in today's economy. According to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics data the national unemployment rate has hovered around 5% over the past 10 years.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, Army recruiting, which is sensitive to fluctuations in labor market conditions, has experienced decreases in the number and quality of enlistments due to low unemployment.<sup>31</sup> Coupled with low unemployment, youth can now earn competitive wages for entry-level jobs and advancement opportunities in a short period of time. The choices are abundant. As Roger Herman of The Herman Group puts it, "workers have more choices of jobs, career fields, and employers than ever before in history. Our expanding economy has created more positions, intensifying competition for a limited number of competent workers. Essentially, qualified employees today can write their own tickets."<sup>32</sup> Not only are jobs plentiful, but the salaries, a key factor in today's youth career choices, are also on the rise.

As stated earlier, youth are pursuing education beyond high school and foregoing military service in hopes of better salaries. Besides getting a college education, one of the primary reasons for going to college is to get higher paying jobs in the job market. As stated in a 2004 RAND research brief on policy options for recruiting, "with wage growth greater for college graduates than for high school graduates, high-quality youth are increasingly interested in

attending college.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, with ample employment opportunities and the lure of high paying jobs, the health of today’s economy is exerting extreme pressure on Army recruiting efforts and the Army will have to look at options to counter this trend if it wants to be more appealing to potential enlistees. A healthy economy is one factor drawing away qualified applicants, but there are also several other factors at work in reducing the pool of potential enlistees.

### The Dwindling Pool

Declining propensity, the attitudes of the Millennials, and the strength of the economy may be adding to a difficult recruiting environment, but so is the dwindling pool of eligible young men and women due to several other compelling reasons. In the 2005 Accessions Research Consortium, it was reported that approximately 55% of the youth market was disqualified to enlist for weight, medical, moral or dependent reasons.<sup>34</sup> Also, there are a growing number of high school students who do not graduate from high school and fail to receive a high school equivalent degree such as the Graduate Equivalent Degree (GED). Finally, the pool of potential recruits is further reduced due to increases in criminal activity and felony charges that prevent offenders from entering the military.

One of the elements that contribute to the dwindling pool of eligible enlistees is the poor health of today’s youth. One of the disqualifying health criteria is being overweight. A rather significant characteristic of youth today is that they are relatively inactive and would rather watch television or surf the Internet than engage in physical activity. According to the American Obesity Association, “the percentage of children and adolescents who are overweight and obese is now higher than ever before. Poor dietary habits and inactivity are reported to contribute to the increase of obesity in youth.” In fact, 30.4 percent of adolescents (ages 12 to 19) are overweight while 15.5 percent are considered obese.<sup>35</sup> These numbers are alarming since multiple studies indicate a strong correlation between youth obesity and adult obesity. Asthma is another disqualifying health criterion for potential enlistment in the Army. According to the latest report from the Centers for Disease Control “the prevalence of childhood asthma cases for all races is at historically high levels in the United States.”<sup>36</sup> These health facts are disheartening for recruiters because they can only add up to a reduced pool of eligible enlistees.

The increase in high school students that drop-out prior to graduation is also contributing to further reduce the pool of potential young Americans to enlist. In June 2006, the U.S. Department of Education along with several other research institutes estimated that only 70 percent of students who enter high school receive a degree four years later. The drop-out rate across the nation has steadily increased since 1979 when approximately 79 percent of students

successfully graduated from high school. Students site boring classes, pursuit of employment due to favorable job opportunities, and difficult family circumstances as several of the primary reasons for quitting school.<sup>37</sup> For the Army to meet its quality objectives in new recruits, it needs enlistees that are fit and have received their diploma or GED certificate. While the Army does accept recruits that have not received a diploma or GED, it needs to limit their numbers. The Department of Defense limits the number of non-high school graduates to 10% of its annual mission because research studies clearly indicate high school dropouts are more likely to present disciplinary problems and to be discharged early from the service. Due to recent difficulties in recruiting the Army received permission from the Department of Defense to bring in an additional 4,000 recruits without GEDs above and beyond the 10% ceiling for this group.<sup>38</sup> The Army's exception to policy remains in effect today. If high school drop-out rates continue to increase and high quality recruits are not available, it could potentially force Army recruiting to accept even greater numbers of lower quality recruits to meet annual mission goals.

Along with education and health issues, the final element that is reducing the number of available recruits is tied to crime and moral reasons. As part of the screening process for new recruits, the Army also looks at a candidate's moral qualifications. Federal law and Department of Defense policy establish these criteria for enlisting in the armed services. If a potential recruit does not possess good moral character they cannot enlist. As Veronica Rose of the Office of Labor Relations explains, "The underlying purpose of the moral character enlistment standard...is to disqualify people likely to become disciplinary cases or security risks or disrupt good order, morale, and discipline."<sup>39</sup> Thus, in accordance with the standard, anyone with a felony conviction, significant criminal record, or under some form of judicial restraint is disqualified.<sup>40</sup>

In light of the moral character standard, many potential enlistees do not qualify for service due to criminal activity. According to the Uniform Crime Report released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on 18 December 2006, preliminary figures show that there has been a 3.7 percent increase in the number of violent crimes in the first half of 2006 when compared to the same period in 2005. Previous reports also show a 2.3 percent increase in the volume of violent crime from 2004 to 2005.<sup>41</sup> In the Army's preferred target population (i.e. juveniles), the number of arrests for murder and robbery climbed 19.9 percent and 11.4 percent, respectively, in 2005 compared with 2004 arrest data, and the number of overall drug abuse violations increased 22.9 percent from 1994 to 2003.<sup>42</sup> Even more revealing are the results released in the latest *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*. In 2002, juvenile courts handled 1.6 million delinquency cases and one in twelve murders in the United States involved

a juvenile offender. In 2003, law enforcement agencies made 2.2 million arrests of persons under the age of 18.<sup>43</sup> Thus, on the basis of moral disqualification, these staggering statistics provide additional evidence as to why the pool of potential recruits continues to shrink.

### New Programs and Policies

In response to the four key factors impacting recruiting, the Army, specifically, the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) is introducing new programs and potential solutions aimed at reversing current trends. The new programs and policies specifically focus on countering the effect of the strong economy, increasing the eligible pool of potential enlistees, and making the Army more appealing to the millennial generation, among others. In conjunction with the program and policy changes, the Army also unveiled its new “Army Strong” advertising campaign as discussed previously to get its message out to potential recruits and their parents to counter declining propensity to enlist. Along with the ad campaign the Army is also reaching out to other key influencers throughout the country through sponsored events like the All-American Bowl Week. As part of the events, the Army highlights the benefits of joining the Army, the daily life of a soldier, medical care benefits, and education opportunities available to new recruits.<sup>44</sup> Thus, through sponsored events and traditional media the Army is getting its strategic message out, and it is also taking advantage of today’s technology.

Current technology offers significant avenues to reach the Millennials. Leveraging technology, the Army is communicating its message via text messaging and online message boards to reach the next generation of potential recruits.<sup>45</sup> The new media tools include a new micro site at GoArmy.com, an “Ask a Soldier” discussion forum where potential recruits can ask questions and receive answers from real soldiers, and a new Army page on MySpace.com, that ranks as the third most popular Web site in the United States.<sup>46</sup> All of these efforts are designed to reach recruits in a non-threatening manner. Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, commander, U.S. Army Accessions command, states, “We’re reaching out to prospects and giving them the information they need where they are and on their terms.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, through today’s technology the Army is getting its messages out in new and innovative methods to reach potential recruits, and one of its messages is that the Army has money available if that’s your motivation. Still, this is not enough.

The 2006 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allowed the Army to give larger financial bonuses for enlistments. To counter the impact of a strong economy, the law now allows the Army to double its maximum enlistment payment to new recruits from \$20,000 to \$40,000. The law also permits the Army to increase monthly pay for recruits who join specific

combat brigades, and it allows former soldiers to rejoin the Army at their old rank without repeating basic training.<sup>48</sup> Overall, enlistment bonuses have become substantial incentives to attract recruits given today's strong economy, but they are not the only financial tool available to recruiters. The Army also offers up to \$65,000 to potential recruits to repay student college loans through the Loan Repayment Program (LRP) for those that qualify.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to enlistment bonuses and LRP, the Army has submitted legislation to the Office of Secretary of Defense for two new programs to bolster current recruiting efforts. The first program is titled the Army Home Ownership Fund (AHO) that would give payments up to \$45,000 to active-duty soldiers with a pre-existing mortgage, or are planning to buy a home in exchange for a six year enlistment. The second program is the Army Business Fund (ABF). The intent of ABF is to attract soldiers to enlist that later become Army entrepreneurs after they have completed their enlistments. If approved, these financial incentives would offer something not found in the civilian job market and unique to the Army.<sup>50</sup> Thus, financial innovation and incentives may ultimately help the Army in its recruiting efforts, but the Army is also looking at ways to compete with the lure of a college education.

The Army College Fund (ACF) is another enlistment incentive that has been increased recently to counter the immediate flow of high school graduates to college campuses. In conjunction with the Montgomery GI Bill, the Army will now help pay for college through the ACF for up to \$72,900 depending on the length of enlistment. All a new recruit has to do is contribute \$100 a month during the first year of service in order to receive the benefit.<sup>51</sup> The 15-month Plus Training Enlistment Option also offers a monthly education allowance for up to 36 months upon successful completion of the enlistment.<sup>52</sup> College incentives are increasing and are an integral part of the Army's arsenal to fight for new recruits.

The Army is also attempting to increase the pool of potential enlistees through two additional measures. First, as part of the 2006 NDAA, the Army raised the enlistment age from age 18 to 26 as long as a potential recruit meets all eligibility and medical standards. Colonel Donald Bartholomew, USAREC Assistant Chief of Staff, G5, states, "We certainly do not expect for this change to result in a large increase of recruits, however it will allow for those individuals who have the passion for service...the opportunity to serve the nation now..." The Army has enlisted more than 1,000 men and women since the policy changed.<sup>53</sup> The second measure to increase the enlistment pool was the addition of the Army GED Plus Enlistment Program. This enlistment program targets high school dropouts in mostly inter-city areas that do not possess a high school diploma or GED. Essentially, the program allows an eligible applicant without a high school diploma or GED to be sponsored by the Army to obtain a GED for enlistment

purposes.<sup>54</sup> Thus, by raising the enlistment age and reaching out to high school dropouts the Army is diligently working to increase the pool of potential recruits by almost 10,000. However, the problem might be bigger than the Army.

With all of the additional programs and policy changes, the Army is making every effort to meet its immediate recruiting objectives. The question remains, will these changes be enough to maintain the Army's current end-strength and potentially increase the size of the Army in the near future? Some members of Congress do not think so. Congressman Charles Rangel, a Democrat from New York, went so far as to introduce a bill on 14 February 2006 that mandates Universal National Service. If passed into law it would require:

all persons in the United States, including women, between the ages of 18 and 42 to perform a two year period of military service or a period of civilian service in furtherance of the national defense and homeland security, and for other purposes.<sup>55</sup>

Not surprisingly the bill is stuck in committee and will in all likelihood fail due to its political sensitivity because it essentially reinstates the draft. Sen. John McCain has also expressed concerns about the size of the Army and maintaining its end-strength. As early as September 2004 he called for an increase of about 70,000 soldiers for the Army anticipating the "long war".<sup>56</sup> Like Sen. McCain, many members of Congress have been outspoken about the size of the Army and recognize the strategic implications for the nation if the Army continues to struggle.

In summary, the Army has taken great strides within its level of resources to address many of the current factors that are negatively impacting its ability to recruit tomorrow's force. The Army has implemented significant programs, changed policies, and looked for innovative ways to meet its recruiting goals. Still it is struggling to meet its required number of recruits and prognosis for the future does not look promising. While Congress has also provided some input, continued to pay for temporary increases in end-strength and war efforts through contingency supplemental funding, it has not taken any drastic steps, such as a draft, to ease the burden on the Army. Therefore, despite all of these efforts, the Army's recruiting woes will continue unless additional measures are taken to keep the Army a viable force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps it's time for the problem to be addressed at levels above the Army?

### Recommendations

The Army has implemented and proposed many "fixes" to improve its ability to recruit, but there is only so much the Army can do by itself. While it can still take a few actions to improve the situation, some of the more difficult problems will require a national approach to reverse

current trends because they are beyond the ability of the Army and the Department of Defense to fix. In the interest of national security and well-being of the Army, the following recommendations are offered as ways for the nation to bolster current Army efforts.

First, the Department of Defense should change policies to allow potential enlistees to maximize monetary enlistment incentives when combined with the Army College Fund. Currently, the Army does not allow a potential enlistee to receive the full amount of the Army College Fund if he/she also chooses a monetary enlistment bonus.<sup>57</sup> The Army has taken considerable measures to increase enlistment incentives. Enlistment bonuses, college money, and loan repayment programs are at an all-time high in terms of dollars available. Allowing a potential recruit to maximize both incentives would potentially be the tipping point to bring them into the Army. Should the Army need additional dollars to support this recommendation, then this would be one way for the Congress to provide concrete support at the national level by providing the additional funding to assist in this strategic problem.

Second, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should develop a Joint Enlistment Option that would allow an enlistee the option to serve in the Army for a period of 24 months with a guaranteed career field selection in another branch of service upon successful completion of his/her Army service. The Joint Enlistment Option would be offered by all of the branches of service. In this manner, the Army would take advantage of the recruiting efforts from all the branches of service thereby significantly increasing its potential to reach a larger share of the enlistment pool. Currently, the services compete for the same potential enlistees since the pool of those available continues to shrink. The benefit of this option is that it could potentially provide an immediate increase in Army enlistments while simultaneously reducing the future recruiting mission of the other services. The Joint Enlistment Option could also be combined with other incentives such as college funds and specialty training bonuses to enhance its attractiveness to potential enlistees.

Third, the White House should implement a national advertising campaign that stresses National Service, not just a particular branch of service, to enhance and support military recruiting advertising. Currently, each branch of service funds and implements an advertising campaign to sell its "brand." Many Americans can identify a service by its "brand." For example, the Army reaped the benefits of its popular "Be all that you can be" slogan for many years. The Navy championed "It's not just a job, it's an adventure", and the Marines still use it's time tested slogan of "The few, the proud, the Marines." Despite the popularity and success of each services ad campaigns, they compete against each other. This recommendation would require the Department of Defense and other government agencies to stress the importance of



service to the nation and not just a particular branch of service. There are currently no advertising initiatives that sell “service to the nation” as its brand. A national service advertising campaign would highlight the importance of defending our nation, appeal to parents and other influencers in its messages and present the educational and monetary incentives available through any branch of service.

Fourth, the Surgeon General should develop and implement a national Anti-Obesity program across the country to increase the pool of eligible recruits. Obesity and related health problems like diabetes is becoming a health epidemic in the United States. The health of the nation is critical to the Army and all of the services for that matter. We need healthy men and women to defend the country. Similar to the *1964 Surgeon General’s Report on Smoking and Health* that shocked the nation into action against smoking<sup>58</sup>, there needs to be a landmark event to reverse current trends in overweight and obesity. Recently, the Surgeon General issued a call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity, but like the 1964 report on smoking, it’s going to require a national effort with a sense of urgency to accomplish the task because it will take a considerable amount of time to achieve results. “Individuals, families, communities, schools, worksites, health care, media, industry, organizations, and government must determine their role and take action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity.”<sup>59</sup> Specifically, the Department of Defense should be one of the government agencies supporting the Surgeon General in this monumental task. Thus, a national program to reverse current trends in obesity and related diseases would assist recruiting efforts by increasing the pool of potential enlistees. While it may not be realistic to increase the pool of potential candidates by a full 30%, cutting the number of obese even by half would have a significant impact.

Fifth, the U.S. Department of Education should link federal aid for higher education to some form of national service. Currently, the government offers millions of dollars in grants, scholarships, and low-interest loans for students to get college degrees. In return the government gets an educated citizen that may or may not provide some form of service to the nation. Linking federal aid to national service would allow the government to get an immediate return on its investment. The military and other national service programs receive a well-educated recruit or service member that provides quality service for a short period of time.

## Conclusion

Recruiting the Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a challenging endeavor, complicated by a “long war” against terrorism and the potential of having to increase the size of the Army by almost 65,000 soldiers in the coming years. The strategic requirements placed on the Army

today are growing and the nation still demands a premier Army to secure our national interests and defend our way of life. On top of this the Army is faced with a recruiting environment characterized by declining propensity to enlist among those eligible to enlist, a generation that has little interest in joining the military, a strong domestic economy that is drawing many into the civilian job market, and a dwindling pool of potential recruits due to factors such as obesity, high school drop-outs, and criminal activity. The Army has implemented numerous programs, changed policies, created innovative ways to increase recruiters, doubled incentives, and re-branded itself to counter the harsh recruiting environment and to appeal to potential recruits. However, the problem and the solution appear to be bigger than the Army.

It is the author's belief that Congress, the Department of Defense, and other governmental agencies should immediately implement several national service programs and recommendations to assist the Army in meeting its recruiting goals now and in the future. A national solution to combating obesity, linking federal aid for education to national service, and creating a national service advertising program are essential to assist the Army in generating momentum to reach more potential recruits. Time is of the essence. The viability of the all-volunteer force is at stake. Thus, while recruiting tomorrow's Army is a task that cannot fail, this author believes it is going to take a national effort and not just an Army effort to make it happen. Not only do we need our "Army Strong", we need "America Strong."

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