

**Prepared Statement**

**of**

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**(Military Personnel Policy)**

**Before the**

**United States House of Representatives**

**Committee on Armed Services**

**--Military Personnel Subcommittee--**

**“Future Recruiting Challenges in the Fiscally Constrained  
Environment”**

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## INTRODUCTION

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss recruiting.

The All-Volunteer Force continues to perform remarkably well as it enters its fifth decade. For over 12 years of protracted conflict, the All-Volunteer Force has shown its resolve and continues to be the strongest and most-respected military force in the world. Our people are the main reason for this success. Our Service Recruiting Commands have sustained the All-Volunteer Force by recruiting the best and the brightest of America's youth from across our nation. Their diverse backgrounds aid immeasurably in finding solutions to the many complex national security issues the Department is charged with around the globe. Our new recruit quality is at an all-time high and our ability to recruit the number of volunteers required to sustain the force is being achieved in almost every category. The continued success of our All-Volunteer Force begins with recruiting, and the viability of the force is assured with successful retention. Both have been easier in some years than it has in others. The support of Congress has clearly helped facilitate our success through over a decade of war. While we are currently achieving our recruiting goals, there are indications that the recruiting environment may become more challenging. I will review the current status of military recruiting and what we anticipate for the future.

While my colleagues from the Military Services will address the specifics regarding their recruiting missions, I will provide you with an overarching assessment of the recruiting environment. Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 was a successful recruiting year. Our

recruiters' hard-work and persistence resulted in all but two of our components achieving their FY 2013 missions, with only the Army Guard (99 percent) and the Army Reserve (88 percent) recruiting less than their goal. Collectively, the Department recruited 276,210 new enlisted members for the Total Military Force in FY 2013.

While meeting our quantitative goals is important, we also need to have a sufficient number of recruits who will successfully complete their term of service and perform successfully while in training and on the job. In order to ensure these recruits are successful, recruit quality is closely monitored and reported. Historically we measure recruit quality in two dimensions: 1) educational achievement, as measured by those who join with a high school diploma and 2) aptitude, as measured by the recruit's Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores.

The Department has consistently met or exceeded both of the established benchmarks for quality, and that remained true in FY 2013. DoD-wide, 99.6 percent of new active duty recruits, and 96.6 percent of Reserve recruits, were high school diploma graduates against our benchmark of 90 percent. Further, 75 and 67 percent respectively scored above average on the AFQT, versus our benchmark of 60 percent.

Through the first quarter of FY 2014, all Services except Army Reserve have met or exceed recruiting quantity and quality objectives year-to-date. The Department will continue to monitor each Service's recruiting efforts monthly, addressing any concerns that may arise.

Despite our continued recruiting success, the recruiting process does have inherent challenges. The size of our youth market is finite. Today, nearly 75 percent of our youth are not qualified for military service with medical conditions and weight

accounting for most of the disqualifications. Compounding eligibility concerns is the lack of youth interested in military service. Data from the Joint Advertising and Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) program reports show that only 14% percent of youth are propensed to serve in the Military. Furthermore, over the past decade the data show a decline in the proportion of youth who make positive associations with military service. JAMRS Youth Tracking Survey shows that in 2004, 63% of youth believed the military offered an attractive lifestyle. Today, only 40% of youth associate military service with an attractive lifestyle. Moreover, in 2004, 85% of youth believed the military would help them earn money for college. Now, only 66% of youth associate military service with earning money for college. Current economic conditions have highlighted the value of serving in the military to some people who in the past may not have given it serious consideration. However, the downward trend in youth unemployment, with the most recent data showing 13.5 percent in December 2013, provides these youth with more opportunities for employment and for continuing their education, which can make military service less attractive. The Department must be proactive and ensure that changes in the recruiting environment are addressed as the economy improves.

In order to expand the recruit market, the Department of Defense (DoD) supports the enlistment of non-citizens to the extent permitted by law, subject to these individuals being otherwise qualified for service in the U.S. Armed Forces. The Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program uses the exception in law that allows DoD to enlist individuals to fill a critical military readiness need determined vital to the national interest. Those readiness needs are currently limited to qualified military health care professionals in critical specialties and individuals with specific heritage level

language capabilities and associated cultural backgrounds. In addition, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) recently issued Policy Memorandum formalizing the policy regarding "Parole in Place" for undocumented family members of military members and veterans. This memorandum benefits our military members but also has driven the need for the Department to review how the DHS policy impacts recruiting policies. This review is already underway.

The Department is very aware of the fiscal realities facing our Nation and has reviewed and adjusted recruiting programs accordingly. In order to overcome the challenges that lie ahead, DoD must maintain sufficient recruiting resources to meet these challenges. In the past, when the recruiting environment was favorable, the resources for recruit advertising/marketing, enlistment bonuses, and recruiter manning have been seen as prime targets for spending decrements. In the mid-to-late 1990s, following the drawdown, recruiting budgets were significantly reduced during the more favorable recruiting environment and not restored in time to adjust for the more challenging recruiting market. This resulted in a period of very difficult recruiting, reduced recruit quality, and a required infusion of significant resources to prevent mission failure. In the past, the Department often had the flexibility of being able to rely on a significant influx of resources to help overcome recruiting challenges. Given the fiscal realities of today's environment the Department must be vigilant and ensure we allocate sufficient resources to recruit an All-Volunteer Force that not only meets today's challenges but will also be able to meet those challenges that our nation may face in the very near future. I will leave it to my colleagues to address the efforts they have taken in their respective Services.

The biggest levers that we rely on to bolster recruiting in general are, recruiting marketing, enlistment bonuses, and recruiter manning. The Department must continue to provide sufficient funding to sustain a level of awareness and production to meet its mission. Regardless of the recruiting environment, enlistment bonuses will be needed to attract youth to serve in certain skills and to ensure efficient use of Service training capacity. Bonuses are much easier to turn off and on than marketing and recruiter manning. Marketing campaigns take time to develop and deploy. This results in a greater lag time between when they are deployed and when we can expect to see results from the campaign. The more we reduce our visibility and our message now, the harder and more costly it will be in the future to get that same message out. If reduced too much it could easily take at least a year or more for us to return to today's level of awareness among America's youth and their mentors. Recruiter manning is even more problematic. On average it takes between a year and 18 months to identify, select, train, and assign recruiters. It takes even longer for them to become productive recruiters. So, while we must look for efficiencies, we must do so cautiously.

The fiscal uncertainties over the past 12 months added some new dimensions to the challenges facing recruiting. Reduced resources, the civilian furloughs and the government shutdown each presented unique challenges for the Services, the Department, and our recruiting force. Our Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS), where new recruits are processed for enlistment, nearly 80 percent are staffed with civilian employees. However the extra efforts of our recruiters, and the recruiting force in general, helped to minimize the impact. During the government shutdown, the recruiting operations were exempted but the shutdown of many associated support functions and the

uncertainties of resource obligations disrupted our recruiting efforts. We are very grateful to the Congress and the President for enacting the recent budget agreement that will help to alleviate many of these uncertainties and will restore our ability to consistently fund recruiting functions albeit at reduced levels.

### **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I want to thank you and members of this Subcommittee for your advocacy on behalf of the men and women of the Department of Defense. Whether the career of a member of the Total Force is measured in months or years, whether that career is spent in a Reserve component, an Active component, a combination of the two, or as a Department of Defense civilian, the nation's gratitude for dedicated service is proved in your continued support and funding for the programs that keep the force strong and healthy. I look forward to your questions.