
Defense Report

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More Blacks in the Army?

Army personnel experts are now forecasting a significant increase in black recruitment, perhaps reaching a rate of 30 per cent by the end of FY 1977, as opposed to the 24.3 rate for the fiscal year which ended June 30th, 1976. According to recent Department of the Army figures, the rate for the month of June was 29 per cent and this higher rate continued throughout the summer of this year.

Based on past recruiting experience, the rate increase will stem from the combination of the reduced recruiting resources made available by the Congress and higher numerical objectives required by current needs. A survey of past recruiting data indicates that this combination will result in a lowering of mental category test requirements and recruiting a lesser proportion of high school diploma graduates if quotas are to be met. Historically, the data shows that under such circumstances the number of blacks enlisting in the Army increases.

As far as the number of blacks in the Army is concerned, at the end of Fiscal year 1976 the percentage of black enlisted men was 23.7. Should the black enlistment rate continue as estimated, the percentage of blacks in the Army will be between 25 and 26% by the end of FY'77. The black officer content is also up from 4.8% in FY'75 to 5.2% as of last June. This percentage should also rise as the input of blacks into West Point, ROTC and other officer producing sources is at an all time high—5.7% at the Military Academy and 20.4% in ROTC.

The black content of the Army will also be affected by the current upward trend of black reenlistments which today is 25.9 per cent as opposed to 20.8 per cent just two years ago. More significant is the sharp increase in the reenlistment of eligible blacks who are completing their first enlistment, which over the same period has risen from 25.2 to 32.6 per cent.

Based on an analysis of the most recent promotion lists in the Army, blacks are doing about as well as whites. For example, 1.0% of the blacks eligible for promotion to brigadier general were selected as opposed to a rate of 1.6% for whites; for colonel, 22.5% for blacks, 19.1% for whites; for major, 64.4% for blacks, 64.1% for whites; and for master/sergeant, 19.0% black, 19.9 white.

One Army expert predicted that, even though blacks make up only about 13% of the population of the United States, the increasing enlistments and reenlistments, together with black upward progress within the Army, will raise the percentage of blacks in the Army to 30% by 1980, if not before.