
Defense Report

AUSA



Another Roadblock for the Volunteer Armed Forces—High Schools that Exclude Recruiters

There has been a great deal of discussion about the first-time failure of all the armed services to meet their quotas for recruits during the 1979 recruiting year. The shortfall has generated proposals to increase enlistment incentives and to restudy the military compensation system. It has also enlivened discussion about the need to seek a more reliable source of military personnel by renewing selective service.

But one major contributor to the services' inability to meet their goals has either been ignored or glossed-over. That is the continued refusal by many high schools to permit military recruiters ready access to young people approaching graduation. Nationwide, 25 percent of the high schools will not let a military recruiter onto school property. Another 25 percent will only let recruiters into the school during job fairs which usually occur just once a year. The combination of these two proscriptions effectively bars recruiters from half of our high schools and denies them full access to the prime source of quality volunteers.

Last year the Army recruited 126,800 volunteers which was 16,400 short of its requirement for new soldiers. In order to achieve that number of enlistments the Army's recruiters made 5,021,300 contacts with young people—an average of 39.6 contacts for every enlistment. Considering the refusal of half the nation's high schools to participate in the process the recruiting achievement was remarkable, so remarkable, in fact, that one wonders how many high school graduates would have volunteered for service if no doors had been closed to the recruiters.

Speculation on the reasons for this resistance on the part of educators wanders in several directions but almost always comes back to residual anti-military sentiments imbued during the Vietnam period and still entrenched in the minds of teachers and administrators who were college students during that period. This state of mind at the high school level is exactly contrary to that which seems to prevail on most college campuses today, where reserve officer training programs are increasingly popular.

Congress will not let the muscle of our armed services atrophy. To keep the ranks filled they will commit more tax dollars and, if that does not do the job, they will surely return to selective service. If the nation truly prefers a volunteer military establishment it must get squarely behind that establishment and see to it that no impediments are scattered in front of the recruiters. One way would be to get our high schools to open their doors.