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# Defense Report

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## **The United States Army on the Brink of the 1980's—Some Facts and Figures**

After eight years as an all-volunteer force the United States Army is about to move into a new decade, the 1980's, and there are some things every citizen of the United States should know about our Army.

First of all, the Army is understrength. As of September 30, 1979, the end of the last fiscal year, the Army was 16,000 below its authorized strength of 774,000. This understrength is only two percent of the total but those 16,000 absent soldiers are equivalent to a full combat division. Of course the Army is maintaining all of its 16 divisions but the 16,000 shortfall takes the form of platoons being shy one squad and companies without a full complement of platoons.

The Army Reserve and Army National Guard, which have to play an important role in any future combat, are struggling to get enough people. The Army Reserve is 72,000 short of its desired strength and the National Guard is 56,000 understrength. The Individual Ready Reserve, the Army's only source of trained replacements in the absence of an operating Selective Service System, is at least 400,000 below the strength needed to satisfy mobilization requirements.

Thirty seven percent of our soldiers are overseas at any given time, reflecting the Army's involvement in carrying out the nation's foreign policy. Many soldiers find themselves shuttling between overseas and statewide assignments in a rapid cycle. This is particularly true for some of the combat specialties, such as armor crew members.

Fifty percent of the Army is married, a phenomenon associated with the voluntary nature of service in the States' armed forces today. Many more of today's recruits enter the service with the intention of making it a career. Actually, though, only 22 percent of the first term enlistees ever carry out their initial intentions by reenlisting. But once that decision to reenlist for the first time has been made the percentage of subsequent reenlistments jumps to almost 53 percent.

About 65 percent of our soldiers are high school graduates, which compares very favorably to our overall society, but only 64 percent of last year's recruits were high school grads, compared to 74 percent the previous year. Almost 100 percent of the Army's commissioned officers have college degrees, making them one of the best educated groups of professionals in the nation.

We will have a good Army in 1980 but it will be an Army with some problems. We must make service in the Army more attractive by keeping compensation competitive with civilian careers and by providing better treatment for our soldiers in the form of adequate housing, good medical care and educational opportunities. By making the recruiters' job easier we will build a better Army.