
Defense Report

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Money for College—It Helps Build Our Army

The first step in building and maintaining a competent Army is recruiting quality personnel and one of the best recruiting aids is an effective educational incentive program like that included in the GI bills of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. One survey after another has shown that the availability of government-subsidized education heads the list of potential incentives toward service in the ranks of our volunteer Army.

That the Army's initiatives for attracting adequate numbers of qualified recruits are working is borne out by the fact that 88 percent of all young men and women who came into the Army in fiscal 1983 were high school graduates and 62 percent were upper-half scorers on the Armed Forces Qualification Test—one half of the latter listed money for college as the number one reason for enlisting. Our recruiters are filling their quotas and they are doing it with high-quality people.

Just as recruiting good men and women is important, so, too, is retaining a proper number of trained soldiers. A truly balanced manpower program must provide for the retention of those qualified people in whom much time, money and other resources have been invested. A properly structured educational assistance program would be important in getting soldiers to reenlist. That program should allow for a substantially increased monthly allowance over that provided recruits and transfer of entitlement to dependent children after extended active service. And it should allow ten years after final service separation to complete using the entitlement.

A new educational incentive program is absolutely necessary to meet the challenges of recruitment and retention of military personnel in both our active and reserve forces if we are to man the Total Army adequately throughout the 1980s. Such a program—the "Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 1983" (HR 1400)—is now pending before Congress. It is hoped that the Administration and Congress will support this highly effective program for attracting and keeping bright, motivated young men and women in the Army. If we fail to do this, at the very least we threaten the all-volunteer concept, at worst the security of our nation.