
Defense Report

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The New GI Bill Brings the Best and the Brightest to the Army

The first step in building and maintaining a competent Army is recruiting quality people and one of the best recruiting aids is an effective educational incentive program. 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 nearly 91 percent of all young men and women who entered the Army in fiscal year 1985 were high school graduates and 63 percent were upper half scorers on the Armed Forces Qualification Test. Nearly half of the latter listed money for college as the number one reason for enlisting. Thanks in good measure to the "New GI Bill," our recruiters are filling their quotas and they are doing it with high quality people.

It's been just one year since Congress instituted this new GI Bill to provide recruits money for college in exchange for their service in uniform. So far Army enlistees are giving the plan very high marks.

To participate, a recruit must contribute \$100 a month for the first year of his enlistment. In return, the soldier can receive \$300 monthly for up to 36 months while attending college.

Education-minded young people seem to like the new GI Bill, as witness the fact that 71 percent of the 105,031 Army recruits who were eligible to enroll in the program during its first 11 months did in fact choose that path. That's nearly three out of every four recruits entering the Active Army. At the same time, National Guard and Army Reserve recruiters report a similarly favorable response to provisions of the new GI Bill affecting their people. Further, the new program has provisions which should aid the Army in retaining many of the quality soldiers who are more likely to grow into the innovative leaders and technicians needed for tomorrow's Army.

What is needed now is the continued full-fledged support of the Administration and Congress for this highly effective program for attracting and keeping bright, motivated young men and women in the Army.