
Defense Report

AUSA



The Volunteer Army—It's Not To Be Taken For Granted

Our All Volunteer Force was born in 1973 when America's last draftee reported for Army service. In this twentieth anniversary year, most Americans uniformly agree that the quality of today's soldiers is exceptional, and that the All Volunteer Force is a resounding success.

Quality of the force is a testament to commitment, sound investment and responsible leadership on the part of the Army and Congress alike. In addition to investment in "people programs" that resulted in competitive pay for soldiers and enlistment incentives like the GI Bill and the Army College Fund, the Army supported highly effective recruiting and advertising programs.

Today's soldiers are the brightest, best educated and most disciplined in our history. They are easier to train and perform better, particularly in team situations and in the use of hi-tech equipment. It is those characteristics that have allowed the Army to concentrate on the tough, realistic training that produces excellent results in both combat operations and humanitarian relief missions.

The Army is now in the midst of its steepest drawdown since the Vietnam War, and while force reduction is necessary, we must remain committed to maintaining the high quality force produced by earlier investment. Even with a smaller force, the Army must maintain a balanced structure of career soldiers and new accessions, otherwise readiness will suffer. Thus, adequately funded recruiting and advertising programs remain essential.

Army recruiters are now finding mission achievement more difficult. Widely publicized downsizing, reduced military pay and benefits, and somewhat improved economic conditions have caused some young people and their parents to question the All Volunteer Force as a viable option for future career success.

America must not take the All Volunteer Force for granted. Recruiting success has always been fragile and our continued ability to attract the best of America's youth is not preordained. The All Volunteer Force was built over time, with significant effort and investment. Its maintenance requires no less a commitment.