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Standards for Army recruits are right

While all the services are experiencing difficulties in recruiting, the Army believes the intellectual standards it searches for in recruits are right. They are standards—especially in testing for ability—that are above those set by the Defense Department.

Army personnel officials say the numbers show that quality recruits succeed in their time in uniform.

Lt. Gen. David Ohle, deputy chief of staff for personnel, at the Pentagon said, “As the new DC SPER, I sat down with the research group at West Point and they have run the numbers [on recruits]. They found the lower the standards the more attrition. ... Incidences [involving discipline, crime, etc.] go up, all the indicators go up. It just makes sense you recruit quality.”

The difficulty recruiters and the Army, indeed all the services face, is that as the drawdown ends more and more recruits are needed to fill the ranks.

It is almost a one for one replacement for those soldiers who either leave early, complete their enlistment or retire.

The Army’s recruiting goal for Fiscal Year 1999 is 74,500, and the Army missed its goal in the active component by about 750 recruits in the previous fiscal year.

Recruiting in all the components is a struggle. “Many of the same problems that face the active component are facing the reserves,” personnel and recruiting officials said.

“We’re going to have build a Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP) base of 7,500 to 8,000 to be successful,” Ohle said. Adding that 35 percent of the recruiting should be in the DEP as the year begins.

That wasn’t the case two years ago, and the Army has been working to overcome that deficit since.

In fact, personnel officials said the Army is going into this year with 23 percent of its goal in the delayed enlistment program.

“That’s the lowest since 1979,” Ohle said. “We don’t want to repeat history,” but it will be a struggle to meet mission with a base so low.

Ohle praised Maj. Gen. Evan Gaddis, new commanding general of the U. S. Army Recruiting Command, Fort Knox, Ky., for reviewing every standard and working with consultants.

“We have to hold recruiting to the standard. ... We’re going back to the [Gen. Maxwell] Thurman theory of management,” Ohle said.

Personnel officials said to help recruiting, the Army is offering \$50,000 for college, cultural outreach programs and increased bonuses.

These include \$3,000 bonuses for most enlistees.

And like the Thurman philosophy, that fixed the Army’s recruiting message on “Be All You Can Be,” the Army is now advertising in a more contemporary way.

“The treatment is fast paced, hard driving and shows an image of a person in the Army consistent with the image prospects have of themselves,” personnel and recruiting officials said.

Ohle said the Army has considered two-year enlistment as part of its total package, but no decision has been made on whether to increase the numbers for that program.

Last year, 7.5 percent of recruits could have chosen that option, but only 2.7 percent did.

Election aftermath: Themes. In the wake of the Nov. 3 election, where the Democrats picked up five House seats and held their own in the Senate, some legislative priorities for the 106th Congress began to emerge— from Republicans in the House, especially those running for House majority leader, stressed in their public comments: tax reform, tax cuts, saving Social Security and a strong global role for the United States.

From Democrats in the House, where there is no challenge, a patients' bill of rights for those in health maintenance organization, increase in the minimum wage, saving Social Security, campaign finance reform, school construction and containing urban and suburban sprawl.

With the House so narrowly controlled by the Republicans, a swing of 10 to 20 votes from moderate party members could lead to Democratic successes in education and HMO reform particularly. The same can be said about the swing of 10 to 20 conservative Democrats on issues involving the global role of the United States. This change in Washington was caused by the 38 percent of the eligible voters who exercised their franchise Nov. 3.

Election aftermath: Future power. When the Republicans took control of the House in 1994, they established a set of rules governing the tenure of the House leadership and committee chairmen. The rules call for chairmen to step down after six years and the leadership— speaker, majority leader, etc.,— to leave after eight years.

At this writing only the chairmanship of the appropriations committee (of the major panels affecting defense) would remain the same if the Republicans continued to be the majority in the House. Rep. C.W. "Bill" Young, R-Fla., will become chairman of the appropriations panel.

That would occur because Rep. Robert L. Livingstone, R-La., moved up to the speaker's post. It would mean changes in national security and budget, among others. Democrats in 1994 said they would continue under those rules.

While many incumbents faced no opposition in the off-year congressional elections, that is likely to change in 2000. Not only will voters have to decide on whom they want to serve as president and members of Congress, many elected officials in 18 states will have to decide what they want to do with the rest of their lives.

The term limits laws that those states passed will force them to decide to retire, move to another elected office in local or state government, or try for a House or Senate seat in Washington.

Election aftermath: Leadership posts. Only the speaker of the House is mentioned in the constitution and then only as the presiding officer of the lower body of Congress. By custom, duties include presiding over the House, exercising considerable influence over who chairs and sits on what committee. The speaker, Rep. Robert Livingstone, R-La., is also third in line for the presidency.

The majority leader, Rep. Richard Arme, R-Texas, is second in command and responsible for the legislative strategy and day-to-day schedule for the House.

The majority whip, Rep. Tom DeLay, is third in command and responsible for lining up and counting the votes in advance and making sure there are enough to pass or defeat a bill.

Conference chairman is now Rep. J.C. Watts, R-Okla. The conference provides a sounding board for junior members, a forum for leaders, produces legislative status reports and research. It rarely creates policy.

The Democratic caucus chair, a post similar to the Republicans' conference chair, was also contested.

National Republican congressional committee chairman. The chairman, now Rep. Thomas Davis, R-Va., helps set campaign strategy, helps decide how to spend money where and raises money for candidates.

This committee is the campaign and fund-raising arm for all Republicans running for the House.

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Iraq costs. As tensions continued to escalate between Iraq and the United Nations over weapons inspections in mid-November, the Defense Department estimated that the repeated deployments and missile strike in 1993 and 1996 cost \$6.7 billion.

This figure does not include scheduled deployments to the area, nor scheduled exercises in the region or continuing operations — such as enforcing the “no-fly zones” over large portions of Iraq.

What \$8.5 billion more for defense means to Army readiness. The addition of \$8.5 billion to the defense budget for Fiscal Year 1999 gives the Army an additional \$315 million in operations and maintenance money. That means more money for training.

Gen. Dennis J. Reimer, Army chief of staff, testified in late September that the Army needs \$700 million more per year to correct training, operations and maintenance deficiencies.

This continuing problem has forced the Army to use war reserve stocks for training, transfer training money to fix again infrastructure and curtail home station training.

Army training goals remain 800 miles for armored and mechanized units and 14.5 hours of flying for helicopter pilots. The shortfall has meant 652 miles for armored and mechanized units and 14 hours for pilots.

Still reading the FY 1999 budget. Congress’ last-minute approval of an omnibus spending bill has meant long hours in a host of government departments, including defense, trying to get a handle on just what was approved. For example, the \$623 million shortfall in medical care accounts was countered with a \$200 million appropriation.

What that likely means is either in February when the new budget is announced or in the early summer, the Defense Department will have to return to Congress to ask for additional money to cover medical costs in Fiscal Year 1999.

The February requests for additional money for health care was one of the reasons that convinced Congress to move to the TRICARE health program as a way to better predict and contain costs. So far, that has not been the case.

And for next year... Defense Secretary William Cohen and Gen. Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spelled out their legislative priorities for the 106th Congress in an interview with Armed Forces Radio and Television in late October.

They are: Closing the pay gap, fixing the retirement system, adequate housing and medical care.

Pentagon spokesman Capt. Michael Doubleday said, “Those quality-of-life issues, along with optempo, perstempo and continuing to be well equipped, ... are factors that come to play in their (service members) decisions about whether they’re going to make the military a career.”

In their interview, Cohen and Shelton said both pay and retirement were issues that would continue past this fiscal year.

Later, Shelton stressed to reporters at a Pentagon press briefing that there truly was a gap between military and civilian pay. He was reacting to a RAND Corporation report that disputed that contention.

RAND was using a different yardstick to measure pay than the one adopted by Congress in fixing military pay in the early 1980s and the one that is still used today.

Greater participation of reserve components at training center. A U.S. Army Forces Command working group, including members of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, are working against a January deadline to submit a study that would lead to more guard and reserve participation at the nation’s two largest combat training centers.

Now, one enhanced brigade does a rotation both at Fort Polk, La., for light forces, and at Fort Irwin, Calif., for heavy forces. In addition other units in the reserve components participate in most rotations.

The challenge the group faces is to find a way to leverage the reservists limited training time — 39 paid days for the guard and 38 for the reserve — into the year-round schedules of the training centers.

Recruiting benefits increase. Department of the Army officials announced Nov. 12 that maximum benefits under the Montgomery G. I. Bill plus the Army College Fund will be increased from \$40,000 to \$50,000.

At its October Annual Meeting, the Association of the United States Army adopted a resolution that urged the continued support and enhancement of the current Montgomery G.I. Bill and called for increased pay and entitlements for soldiers.

The Army College Fund is available to applicants who qualify for selected Army skills, also known as military occupational specialties. Last year, more than 11,000 men and women who joined the Army qualified for and selected the Army College Fund.

"This is great news for young people and their parents," said Maj. Gen. Timothy Maude, director of military personnel management at the Pentagon. Maude is responsible for Army recruiting policy issues. "The Army has been concerned for sometime that education entitlements from the military service are lagging behind the private sector. We must remain competitive," he said.

In a related move, the Army also announced revisions to its enlistment bonus program. Effective Nov. 12, all qualified applicants are eligible for a \$3,000 sign-up bonus if they report to training between now and May 1999.

In the past, Army bonus incentives were targeted to specific critical specialties. Those programs will remain in effect, offering up to \$12,000.

In some cases, applicants may qualify for the \$3,000 sign-up bonus and combine it with another enlistment bonus that targets a specific specialty, as long as the total doesn't exceed \$6,000 for a three-year enlistment, or \$12,000 for a four-year or longer enlistment.

These programs recognize the Army's commitment to attract the best and the brightest from America's youth population, according to Maude.

"We know that a young person with a high school diploma and higher-than-average aptitude will be a great soldier. We also realize that they have multiple career options. We want them to choose us," Maude said.

AUSA, concerned that the 14 percent pay gap between soldier pay and pay in the private sector is adversely affecting recruiting and retention in the service and is fundamentally unfair, has accepted the challenge to ensure that aggressive corrective measures are taken to correct the inequities that have a negative impact on the quality of life of soldiers and their families.

Army may use a 'Louisiana Maneuvers' experiment to attract more Hispanic recruits. The Army's personnel chief and its manpower reserve affairs officials are looking at new ways—including a possible "Louisiana Maneuvers" experiment—to attract Hispanics into uniform.

"Louisiana Maneuvers" for today's Army means a series of advanced warfighting experiments to measure the impact of advances in communications and computer hardware and software on combat. Its roots lay in the exercises the Army conducted before the United States' entry into World War II to measure the service's ability to fight a modern foe.

Lt. Gen. David Ohle, deputy chief of staff for personnel, said, "Just think if you could do for recruiting what Louisiana Maneuvers did for force development. In other words, why can't we do an experiment to see how we can better recruit Hispanic Americans for recruiting command? We called them AWEs in Force XXI. ... So we'll be looking at new innovative ways without lowering the overall standards, but accommodating an experiment."

The Army is working with the League of United Latin American Citizens in encouraging Hispanic students to stay in school.

Ohle said the Army is looking for more Hispanic recruiters and soldiers on permissive TDY to help attract Hispanics and more Hispanic officers. "We have got Spanish language advertising now. ... We think they (the ads) are effective."

The recent television advertising has contributed to a rise in the number of Hispanics in the Army from 8.7 percent of the force to 10.3.

"How do you balance the language challenge with their trainability and their retainability? That's the heart and soul of the experiment," Ohle said.

The Army plans to use similar cultural outreach programs to attract recruits in Asian communities, as well.