

Senate Armed Service Committee
Subcommittee on Personnel

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9:30 a.m.

Hearing on Military Recruiting

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Commander, Air Force Recruiting Service

Mr. Chairman and honorable members of this committee, I want to thank you for affording the Air Force an opportunity to discuss its robust recruiting mission. It is with great pride that I represent the world's finest Air, Space and Cyberspace Force and all of the Airmen who are engaged every day in the joint fight providing rapid response during conflicts and humanitarian relief across the world.

As the Air Force transforms to a leaner and more agile force to meet today's global challenges, our recruiters continue to succeed in their primary goal of finding the right people with the right skills at the right time.

Active Component Recruiting

The Air Force exceeded its enlisted recruiting goal in 2007 for the eighth consecutive year, and for the 77th straight month.

Since 2000, the Air Force has enlisted 258,166 Airmen against a goal of 254,753 for 101 percent of mission accomplishment. For 2008, the active-duty requirement is 27,800 and the Air Force is well on its way toward meeting its goal for the ninth straight year.

The quality of our recruits remains significantly above Department of Defense benchmarks in all primary indicators, consistent with the high Air Force standards of the last two decades. Seventy-nine percent of our enlistees scored at or above the 50th percentile on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test last year, a number that has remained above 75 percent since 2000. Additionally, every single Air Force accession enters the service with at least a high-school degree or an equivalent education. Furthermore, ninety-one percent of our recruits enter without requiring a waiver for moral, drug or criminal issues. Finally, more than 15 percent of all Air Force enlistees entered with more than a year of college credits last year – nearly a 30-percent increase from 2001.

Recruiting Service continues to recruit a diverse, high-quality volunteer force to fill jobs vital to the Air Force in accomplishing its worldwide mission. Our hard-to-fill, critical warfighting career fields are always at the forefront of this effort. Over the last seven years, despite increased requirements in all Air Force “special ops” categories, every single opening for Combat Controller (CCT), Pararescue (PJ), Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE), and Linguist has been filled. Congress has provided assistance to these hard-to-fill positions in the way of an Initial Enlistment Bonus (IEB) ranging from \$1,500 to \$13,000, depending on the job and length of enlistment. No other job skills enlistment bonuses are offered.

Officer recruitment programs, with the exception of our medical career fields, have met with continued mission success. On the medical side, last year the Air Force recruited just under half of its fully qualified healthcare target. Broken down by specialty, it amounted to 68 doctors (17.4%), 45 dentists (25.5%), 222 nurses (62.5%), 125 biomedical scientists (62.8%), and 34 medical administrators (97%). This need is made all the greater because the Air Force has deployed over 8000 medical officers in support of the Global War on Terror since 2001.

Air Force Recruiting Service and the Air Force Medical Service have partnered to reduce the shortfall in medical officer recruiting. At the forefront of our medical accessions plan is an increase in health professions scholarships and a realignment of health professions recruiters to major American medical education centers. As a result, Recruiting Service has placed more emphasis on bringing in student-based accessions versus fully qualified professionals. While civilian medical facilities struggle with the same challenge of maintaining a viable medical corps, assistance from Congress to support our efforts has come in the form of authorization of

accession bonuses for fully qualified medical professionals. Similarly, we have significantly increased available medical scholarship opportunities.

Air Force Recruiting continues to hurdle other challenges, including the dynamics of the recruiting environment, limited resources, and the quality of the age-eligible demographic.

The propensity for young Americans to serve their country, coupled with a drop in key influencers—such as teachers, coaches & family members--recommending service, is at its lowest point in 35 years. Moreover, nearly three quarters of America's youth do not meet eligibility standards to serve in our nation's military, so the Air Force must compete for qualified candidates not only with the other services, but with colleges and industry as well. Making that task even more difficult is the fact that an increasing number of communities and high schools are less likely to welcome recruiters.

A reduction in both recruiters and money has made it a tough playing field, but one on which Air Force recruiters continue to excel. The Air Force Recruiting Service consistently stays six months ahead of the game in filling its enlistment job contracts (our "job bank"), with 70 percent of our flights and 90 percent of our squadrons making their recruiting goals. This indicates teamwork at "full production."

Air Force recruiting efforts have benefited from strong perpetuation – by our Airmen whose positive recruitment experience was followed by good opportunities in training, education and duty during their enlistments, who then spread that message back home. We believe our success in this regard is strongly tied to the Air Force's core value of integrity.

The Air Force has also initiated creative approaches in targeted recruiting, primarily focusing on events that young Americans attend such as extreme sporting venues like motorbike racing, snowmobile racing and surfing.

Reserve Component Recruiting

In addition to our active force, our air reserve component is experiencing successful recruiting efforts while facing additional recruiting challenges.

The Air Force Reserve met its recruiting goals for a seventh consecutive year. That being said, a 10-percent reduction in personnel planned over the FYDP, coupled with the impact of BRAC initiatives, presents significant future recruiting challenges for the Air Force Reserve. With the personnel reductions brought about by the realignment and closure of Reserve installations due to BRAC and Total Force Integration, approximately 20 percent of the force will be directly impacted by the planned changes through new and emerging missions, and mission adjustments to satisfy Air Force requirements. In light of all these changes, they expect the recruiting environment will be turbulent, dynamic and challenging.

It's important to remember the Air Force Reserve is a local force and that growing units will face significant recruiting challenges when considering the availability of adequately qualified and trained personnel. As has always been the case, they will focus on maximizing prior service accessions. Regular Air Force reductions over the FYDP may prove beneficial to their recruiting efforts, but will not be the complete answer since only the Regular Air Force critical skills closely match those in the Reserve. Non-prior service or "other prior service" individuals accessed by the Reserve will inevitably require extensive retraining which is costly.

The Air National Guard achieved 99.3 percent of its recruiting goal for FY07. 2008 is off to a great start for enlisted recruiting, but officer recruiting is short, largely due to the issues associated with Base Realignment and Closure and Total Force Initiatives. Overall, these initiatives will make tremendous improvements in the integration of the Active and Reserve Components, but these initiatives have caused some short term recruiting challenges. The

impact of these transformation initiatives within the Air National Guard cannot be understated, as many Air National Guard units were faced with challenges regarding their future mission and personnel requirements, making it difficult to accomplish the full recruiting mission during that time.

The good news is that all transformation initiatives will be effective in the April timeframe and this should serve as a positive turning point in the Air National Guard's recruiting efforts. While many opportunities still exist in the traditional fighter, air refueling, airlift and special operations missions, there is an increasing need for talent in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, unmanned aerial systems, space, cyberspace and expeditionary medical support. The Air National Guard recruiting force is now engaged in a dramatic effort to attract the nearly 9,000 enlisted personnel and 2,700 officers it will need to perform the Air National Guard missions of the future.

To ensure separating active duty personnel have every opportunity to continue service in the reserve component, we request that any future legislation enacted to assist services with drawdown efforts should encourage or incentivize continued service in the reserve component. Retaining our separating active component members is the best investment the country can make for our reserve component because it ensures a force that is ready and able to go to war at any time.

Conclusion

Our nation is facing challenging times. The Air Force has been in continual combat operations for the last 17 years. Military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have tested our ranks and national polls indicate that young Americans are less likely to consider joining the

military, but well-qualified young men and women keep on serving – a testament to the tremendous quality of our countrymen, our Air Force and our all-volunteer recruiters.

The bottom line is our Total Force – comprised of active-duty, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard – continues to bring in quality men and women because it matters. We recruit to retain, so we recruit the brightest candidates possible, then provide them with tough, highly technical training that gives them the right skills to sustain the combat capability of America's Air Force.