



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON DC 20310

20 JUL 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: A Call to Service to Overcome Recruiting and Retention Challenges

**State of the Recruiting Market.** America's military faces the most challenging recruiting environment since the All-Volunteer Force was established in 1973, driven in part by the post-COVID labor market, intense competition with the private sector, and a declining number of young Americans interested in uniformed service. Currently, only 23 percent of 17- to 24-year-old Americans are fully qualified to serve. Pandemic-driven constraints like virtual learning have further limited access to the recruiting population in high schools and exacerbated a decline in academic and physical fitness levels. Preliminary data suggests remote schooling may have lowered overall Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) scores by as much as 9 percent. These conditions have negatively affected the Army's ability to meet its recruiting targets.

Underlying these specific challenges in the recruiting environment are broad "gaps" identified by market research as hindering young people from considering Army service:

- *Knowledge Gap.* The Army's story is not reaching enough Americans, most of whom have limited exposure to currently serving Soldiers or veterans.
- *Identity Gap.* Potential recruits cannot see themselves in the Army, often due to assumptions about Army life and culture.
- *Trust Gap.* Younger Americans are losing trust and confidence in many American institutions, including the military.

**End Strength Projections.** The Army is making every effort to overcome these challenges, but we will not overcome them overnight. Barring a significant positive change in the current recruiting environment, we anticipate end strength will be approximately 466.4K at the end of fiscal year 2022 (FY22). The Army has already taken steps to begin improving our recruiting efforts, and we will continue to do so, but we currently project that our end strength may further decrease to approximately 445K–452K by the end of FY23. Though it will take time, our objective is to regrow our end strength to 460K or more as quickly as possible, and we will pursue this objective aggressively.

**Near-Term Initiatives.** Effective immediately, the Army accessions enterprise leadership, including the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs); the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1; the Commanding General, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command; the Commanding General, U.S. Army Recruiting

## SUBJECT: A Call to Service to Overcome Recruiting and Retention Challenges

Command; and the Chief, Army Enterprise Marketing Office, will implement the following initiatives while continuing to pursue more aggressive and innovative efforts in the near term.

All initiatives will be informed by first principles: 1) We will not sacrifice quality for quantity. 2) We will not lower our standards. 3) We will invest in America's young people so they can meet our standards, because the Army is unparalleled in its ability to unlock a person's full potential.

- Establish the Future Soldier Preparatory Course (FSPC) pilot program with the objective of better preparing recruits physically and academically to meet accessions standards, investing in those with a desire to serve so they can enlist in the Army without lowering quality. Expand and scale the FSPC based on the pilot's results.
- Extend over 420 of the Army's best military recruiters across nationwide markets to help increase the number of potential recruits.
- Increase funding for targeted enlistment bonuses (up to \$50K), to include incentives for critical Military Occupational Skill (MOS) career fields.
- Provide quick-ship bonuses (\$35K) for recruits willing to ship within 45 days.
- Expand Station of Choice options for new recruits to provide additional opportunities to serve across the Nation.
- Implement the former Department of the Army Selected Recruiter (DASR) Mentorship Program to support current DASRs.
- Provide additional funding for national, regional, and local marketing in key priority population centers, including funding for recruiting events to engage with youth.
- Establish six Regional Marketing Offices to better support regional and local recruiting efforts.
- Continue implementation of *Know your Army* and *Passions* marketing campaigns while focusing efforts to improve the conversion of leads to appointments and appointments to contracts.
- Implement the revised tattoo policy, in line with other military services, that enables more of our youth population to serve.

**Long-Term Initiatives.** The Army accessions enterprise leadership, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Army-directed Accessions/Recruiting Tiger Team (ARTT), will complete a comprehensive review of the Army accessions enterprise and make

## SUBJECT: A Call to Service to Overcome Recruiting and Retention Challenges

recommendations to modernize the enterprise, address recruiting challenges, mitigate risk to the All-Volunteer Force, and position the Army for success in the future. The review will include, but is not limited to:

- Identifying, assessing, and selecting the best Battalion Commanders for our Recruiting Battalions through established talent management initiatives.
- Applying talent management principles to recruiter selection.
- Better incentivizing and rewarding increased recruiter productivity.
- Applying digital age technology to recruiting operations.
- Reviewing current recruiting facilities/stationing practices and policies to ensure they enable a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to recruiting.
- Launching a brand refresh to connect the opportunities and benefits of Army service to what matters most to American young people.
- Leveraging the influence of the local communities and community leaders including our Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army (CASA) program.
- Reevaluating retention and reenlistment models to ensure the Army provides opportunities to retain our best Soldiers.

**Maintaining Readiness.** Despite these challenges, the Army has maintained a high rate of readiness as recently demonstrated by the depth and agility of the Army's sustained response in Europe. Soldier retention rates remain high across all components, with the active Army already achieving 103 percent of its FY22 goal. We also continue to leverage the Total Army to meet ongoing and urgent requirements at home and around the world.

The Army will focus on increasing retention, executing precision manning, and prioritizing units based on the National Defense Strategy (NDS). Expected shortfalls from reduced end strength will be most acute in our junior enlisted Soldiers who generally serve as members of squads or teams. We will ensure that we assign our valued junior enlisted Soldiers to our highest priority units so that we maintain required readiness levels. The Army will be able to meet its requirements under the NDS, but will have to make some hard choices on Total Army organization and increase reliance on the Reserve components, which in turn will require adjustments to our funding and mobilization assumptions.

The Army is committed to continuing to build a lethal, agile, and combat-credible force that can and will meet our global demands. The Army is reorganizing to a division-

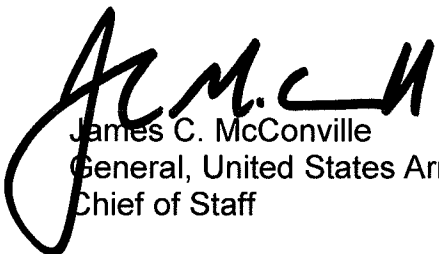
SUBJECT: A Call to Service to Overcome Recruiting and Retention Challenges

centric force after 20 years of counterinsurgency operations, which also requires a redesign of the armored and infantry brigade combat teams. These ongoing redesigns will enable the Army to invest in improved air and missile defense, long-range precision fires, cyber operations, and other multi-domain capabilities to outpace our adversaries. The Army also remains on target to build five Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTFs) that will enable combatant commanders to break through and disintegrate adversary layered defenses.

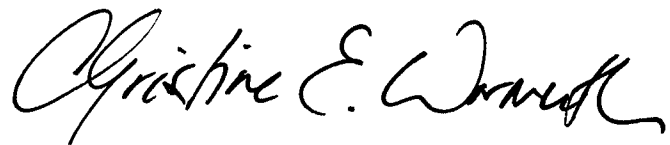
**Resources.** Within the FY23 Military Personnel Army appropriation, approximately \$890M to \$1.2B originally budgeted for end strength must now be applied to other urgent priorities, including increased funding requirements for enlistment and retention bonuses. We also need to fund enhanced and improved marketing and recruiting products needed to achieve our FY23 accessions and end strength missions. The current estimate for expanded enlistment and retention bonuses in FY23 totals \$550M–\$600M. Finally, funding will also be required to pay an increased number of mobilized Reserve Component Soldiers to meet operational demands.

Looking to the future, the Army built our FY24–FY28 Program Objective Memorandum (POM) recognizing that end strength would decrease in the near term. However, the recruiting situation is dynamic and we are taking steps in real time to improve our recruiting enterprise. As such, we will continue to closely monitor the situation before determining whether to make changes to the FY24–FY28 POM and finalizing the FY24 budget request. The Army fully intends to use any asset gained from a reduced end strength to address critical Army priorities, including modernization to support a smaller, but more lethal force and quality of life improvements to increase retention and satisfaction in serving.

**Call to Service.** The United States Army exists for one purpose, to protect the Nation by fighting and winning our Nation’s wars as a member of the Joint Force, and our readiness depends on a quality All-Volunteer Force. This is not a recruiter problem. This is an Army problem. We are in a war for talent, and it will take all our people – Soldiers across all components, Families, Army Civilians, and Soldiers for Life – to fight and win this war.



James C. McConville  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff



Christine E. Wormuth  
Secretary of the Army

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