

STATEMENT BY

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UNITED STATES ARMY

BEFORE

FEDERAL WORKFORCE SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SECOND SESSION, 110TH CONGRESS

JUNE 10th, 2008

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

UNTIL RELEASED BY THE

OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

Chairman Davis, Congressman Marchant and other distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the America's Army. I take tremendous pride in saying that today's All-Volunteer Force is actually an "all-recruited" force and they are proudly representing our Nation throughout the Army.

America is about opportunity – not about denying opportunity. The Army has always been a vehicle for advancement in America. For the last 35 years the Army has been an All Volunteer Force. It has welcomed America's sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers willing and qualified to serve our country. The Army continues to transform people from all walks of life into quality Soldiers, leaders and heroes imbued with a warrior and winning spirit. These volunteers, whether serving a tour or a career contribute to a more capable and better America.

FY 2008 is another challenging recruiting year. We are working harder than ever to achieve the FY08 mission of 80,000 recruits for the Regular Army, 60,600 recruits for the Army National Guard and 26,500 recruits for the Army Reserve. These missions allow us to grow the Army to the size needed to defend the Nation. We believe we will meet our mission in all three components.

Recruiting Environment

On July 1st of this year we will mark the 35th anniversary of the All-Volunteer force. While celebrating this milestone we continue to recruit during a period of protracted combat. Today's recruiting environment is incredibly challenging. Less than 3 out of 10 of our Nation's youth are fully qualified for service in the Army due to disqualifying medical conditions, criminal records, lack of education credentials or low aptitude test scores.

Additionally, the Army competes aggressively with industry and the economy. Fewer and fewer parents and influencers encourage their family members and other young adults to join the military. The desire to enlist in the Armed Forces is at its lowest point in two decades.

Despite these challenges in the current environment, 170,000 Americans stepped forward to enlist in the Regular Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard last year. In our conversations with commanders throughout the Army, it is clear that our Soldiers proudly serve. Our volunteer Soldiers are re-enlisting in large numbers, particularly those in combat. Money alone does not convince them to stay on the team; they realize the importance of what they do. They are committed to each other, their mission and our great Nation. We have the best trained, best equipped, and best led Army in the world. Each of these Soldiers became an American hero the day he or she decided to enlist.

Enlistment Policy

We do not actively recruit individuals with prior criminal records – however, we do have a process that works well to screen those who do seek to enlist. We carefully consider those with criminal histories who have demonstrated they have overcome their past mistakes and now have a desire to serve our Country. The Army operates within authority of Federal law regarding the enlistment into the Armed Services of individuals with prior criminal records. Federal law prohibits those convicted of a felony from entering any armed force. However, it does provide the secretary of a military department to authorize exceptions. In this case, the Secretary of the Army has specifically delegated his authority to grant exceptions for enlisting an individual to the Commanding General United States Army Recruiting Command. Additionally, certain individuals are ineligible for military service based on possessing criminal records that make them ineligible to carry a firearm.

Waivers

All Soldiers serving in our Army are qualified to serve. We have a solid process for reviewing and approving all waivers. We carefully screen applicants who have been charged with a felony. Conduct waivers for applicants with felony charges are approved at the General Officer level. These requests are reviewed by 10 different decision makers to determine whether or not it is in the best interests of our Army to allow the applicant the opportunity to serve. In FY07, only approximately 700 of the over 170,000 Soldiers (less than one-half of one percent) who joined the Regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve were ever convicted of a felony.

The Army has a rigorous waiver process that works, enabling it to meet its manpower goals and provide the nation a quality force. Within each case, a General Officer reviews the entire chain of command recommendation and makes the final determination of each case. In considering a waiver, we look at the whole person. For applicants who made a mistake earlier in life and want to serve their country, we examine their performance at school, at work, in their personal life, and in the community. This thorough examination of the facts, circumstances and the legal disposition of the charges provide a total person review prior to making a decision to allow individuals to enlist in our Army with a conduct waiver.

These men and women are raising their hand, asking for a chance to serve their Country. They are asking for a chance to be a productive member of society. They fully realize they are signing on to defend the Constitution of the United States on behalf of their fellow citizens. They enter our Army, grow and mature as a result of Army training, teamwork, exposure to Army Values and to the Warrior Ethos. I am confident that

our process is sound and in the best interest of the applicant, the Army and our Nation.

In our continuing efforts to define what constitutes a “quality” Soldier, the Army is evaluating whether Soldiers enlisting with waivers perform on par with non-waivered recruits over time. A recent three year (2003-2006) Army study comparing the performance of Soldiers without waivers to 17,000 Soldiers admitted with conduct waivers, found that those with conduct waivers reenlisted at a higher rate, advanced to sergeant faster, and had a higher ratio of valorous awards. Soldiers for whom waivers were granted did have somewhat higher misconduct rates. These Soldiers had slightly greater numbers in losses to the Army in some categories of misconduct, but had lower loss rates in entry-level performance and unsatisfactory performance. Our conclusion based on this study and the results attained is that these Soldiers serve the Army in the same capacity as all other Soldiers and further, gain back personal achievement that is rare in their civilian lives.

Conclusion

I am confident in the quality of the Soldiers entering our Army today. I am confident in the processes and leadership in place for recruiting for our Army.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.