

Military Recruitment

Increasing the Size and Power of the U.S. Military

Background

There is a rational need to worry about America's security in a fiery world. Today, war is common and ongoing; tomorrow, additional conflicts are quite possible. Facing the dangerous world of the 21st century, the U.S. military is too small to meet current needs or expected contingencies. After opposing force increases for many years, the Administration, through the new Secretary of Defense, proposed in January 2007 a combined increase in active-duty soldiers and Marines of some 65,000 above current levels.

Beyond Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and Korea, the United States may have to address several additional potential crises through military means. The U.S. military is simply too small to meet current needs, and possible future contingencies could also be quite demanding. Even when involved in one major conflict, the United States needs additional capability to deter other crises, as well as to maintain forward presence, carry out joint exercises with allies, and handle smaller problems. Stretched almost to the breaking point in Iraq, the U.S. military now is patently unable to contemplate another war with anything less than horror.

Recommendations

Highly plausible scenarios involving Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and other large countries (such as Indonesia, Congo, and Nigeria) illustrate the need to provide the next President with the capacity to muster large new forces without delay. Most acutely, the potential need to sustain substantial forces in Iraq also argues for a larger force posture—not necessarily to increase our deployment to Iraq but to make the mission sustainable for an all-volunteer military that is already being overused.

There should be little debate over the proper direction of change: both the Army and Marine Corps must grow, as fast as is practicable, for the foreseeable future. The new President should take the following steps to increase military capacity and readiness:

- Expand Ground Forces Now—The U.S. now needs at least 100,000 additional active duty soldiers and Marines. Even more important than such an overall



- goal is the need to start moving in the right direction, immediately, building as rapidly as recruiting constraints allow.
- **Cut Waste in the Defense Department**—Through carefully crafted changes involving electronics and operational reforms, the President and Defense Department could save, relatively painlessly, about \$10-15 billion per year. These savings could support a portion of the needed increases in personnel and technologies.
 - **Recruitment**—The reinstatement of the draft simply does not make sense given the outstanding quality of the all-volunteer force to date, which would surely be compromised by conscription, and the impossibility of designing a fair system of conscription. Since the draft is not a good option, our nation has to be creative in order to “grow the force” by 25,000 or more a year. A serious idea worthy of consideration, is to promise American citizenship to qualified foreigners who enlist in the armed forces. Some of these individuals could actually be recruited abroad, through new overseas recruiting offices for the U.S. military.

Key Facts

- the U.S. military is now about 1.4 million active-duty troops, plus more than 100,000 activated reservists
- the military now suffers from the greatest strain it has encountered since conscription ended in 1973

A full version of this proposal, as well as supporting background material, is available at www.opportunity08.org

About the Authors and the Project

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