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Report to Congressional Requesters

August 2006

MILITARY RECRUITING

DOD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility over Recruiter Irregularities

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GAO-06-846

August 2006

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-06-846, a report to congressional requesters

MILITARY RECRUITING

DOD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility over Recruiter Irregularities

Why GAO Did This Study

The viability of the All Volunteer Force depends, in large measure, on the Department of Defense's (DOD) ability to recruit several hundred thousand individuals each year. Since the involvement of U.S. military forces in Iraq in March 2003, several DOD components have been challenged in meeting their recruiting goals. In fiscal year 2005 alone, three of the eight active and reserve components missed their goals. Some recruiters, reportedly, have resorted to overly aggressive tactics, which can adversely affect DOD's ability to recruit and erode public confidence in the recruiting process. GAO was asked to address the extent to which DOD and the services have visibility over recruiter irregularities; what factors may contribute to recruiter irregularities; and what procedures are in place to address them. GAO performed its work primarily at the service recruiting commands and DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command; examined recruiting policies, regulations, and directives; and analyzed service data on recruiter irregularities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making several recommendations to improve DOD's visibility over recruiter irregularities and the services' ability to track and report allegations and incidents of irregularities. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred or partially concurred with four of GAO's five recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-846.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Derek B. Stewart at (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

DOD and the services have limited visibility to determine the extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring. DOD, for example, has not established an oversight framework that includes guidance requiring the services to maintain and report data on recruiter irregularities and criteria for characterizing irregularities and establishing common terminology. The absence of guidance and criteria makes it difficult to compare and analyze data across services and limit's DOD's ability to determine when corrective action is needed. Effective federal managers continually assess and evaluate their programs to provide accountability and assurance that program objectives are being achieved. Additionally, the services do not track all allegations of recruiter wrongdoing. Accordingly, service data likely underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities. Nevertheless, available service data show that between fiscal years 2004 and 2005, allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing increased, collectively, from 4,400 cases to 6,600 cases; substantiated cases increased from just over 400 to almost 630 cases; and criminal violations more than doubled from just over 30 to almost 70 cases. The department, however, is not in a sound position to assure Congress and the general public that it knows the full extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring.

A number of factors within the recruiting environment may contribute to irregularities. Service recruiting officials stated that the economy has been the most important factor affecting recruiting success. Almost three-quarters of active duty recruiters responding to DOD's internal survey also believed that ongoing hostilities in Iraq made it hard to achieve their goals. These factors, in addition to the typical challenges of the job, such as demanding work hours and pressure to meet monthly goals, may lead to recruiter irregularities. The recruiters' performance evaluation and reward systems are generally based on the number of contracts they write for applicants to enter the military. The Marine Corps is the only service that uses basic training attrition rates as a key component of the recruiter's evaluation. GAO previously recommended that the services link recruiter awards and incentives more closely to applicants' successful completion of basic training. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendation, but has not made this a requirement across the services.

The services have standard procedures in place, provided in the Uniform Code of Military Justice and service regulations, to investigate allegations of recruiter irregularities and to prosecute and discipline recruiters found guilty of violating recruiting policies and procedures. In addition, to help recruiters better understand the nature and consequences of committing irregularities in the recruitment process, all services use available information on recruiter wrongdoing to update their training.

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Abbreviations

AVF	All Volunteer Force
DOD	Department of Defense
E-5	Enlisted Grade—Five
E-6	Enlisted Grade—Six
MEPS	military entrance processing station
OUSD	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense

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Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

August 8, 2006

The Honorable Vic Snyder
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Pete Stark
House of Representatives

The viability of the All Volunteer Force (AVF) depends, in large measure, on the Department of Defense's (DOD) ability to successfully recruit several hundred thousand qualified individuals each year to fill over 1,400 occupational specialties. Since the March 2003 involvement of U.S. military forces in Iraq, attracting sufficient numbers of high-quality recruits to military service has proven to be one of the greatest personnel challenges faced by DOD since the inception of the AVF. The active Army, the Army Reserve, and the Navy Reserve, for example, failed to meet their fiscal year 2005 recruiting goals.

Recruitment of high-quality personnel is a tough proposition, made even more challenging in the current environment when the nation is engaged in combat operations. To exacerbate the recruitment challenges further, DOD estimates that over half of the youth in the U.S. population between the ages of 16 and 21 do not meet the minimum requirements to enter military service. Moreover, additional factors such as the shrinking numbers of new recruits in delayed entry programs[1] and the Army's use of stop loss, which delays servicemembers from leaving active duty, indicate that the components may experience continued recruiting challenges as they attempt to meet their personnel requirements.

To help overcome recruiting challenges, the military services during the past several years have assigned roughly 20,000 recruiters to manage their recruiting programs and achieve their accession goals. In addition, the services have taken other steps to enhance their recruiting efforts, such as

[1]Recruits in a delayed entry program include those recruits who have completed the enlistment process but not yet reported to basic training. The time period that recruits spend in the delayed entry program ranges from 1 day to 1 year. The Army now refers to the delayed entry program as the Future Soldiers Training Program.

offering increased enlistment bonuses and other benefits. Despite these actions, many of the recruiting challenges remain.

Determined to find ways to succeed in a challenging recruiting environment, some recruiters, reportedly, have resorted to overly aggressive tactics, such as coercion and harassment. Such tactics are violations of recruiting policies and diminish the public's perception of, and confidence in, the recruiting process. Furthermore, recruiter irregularities can negatively impact the services' recruiting ability by damaging relationships with potential applicants, and causing those who have influence over potential applicants to question military service. These influencers include parents, coaches, teachers, and other family members. Consequently, a recruiter's actions can be far reaching and have significant impact. Given the large numbers of servicemembers DOD must recruit every year, there is ample opportunity for recruiter irregularities to occur. A 2005 internal DOD survey reports about 20 percent of active duty recruiters believe that irregularities occur frequently.[2] Even one incident of recruiter wrongdoing can erode public confidence in the recruiting process.

We looked at military recruiting processes in two prior reports dated January 1997 and January 1998,[3] both of which recommended that DOD needed to improve its recruiter performance criteria across the services. Both of these reports point to the increased stress on recruiters as a result of restrictive recruiting goals and long working hours to succeed in a tough recruiting environment.

This report addresses the following questions: (1) To what extent do DOD and the services have visibility over recruiter irregularities? (2) What factors within the current recruiting environment may contribute to

[2]Department of Defense, Defense Human Resources Activity, Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies, *2005 Recruiter Quality of Life Survey, Topline Report*, JAMRS Report No. 2006-002 (Arlington, Va.: February 2006). The response rate for the DOD internal survey was 46 percent. Because DOD did not conduct a nonresponse bias analysis, we cannot determine whether estimates from this survey may be affected by nonresponse bias. Such bias might arise if nonrespondents' answers to survey items would have been systematically different from those of respondents.

[3]GAO, *Military Attrition: DOD Could Save Millions by Better Screening Enlisted Personnel*, GAO/NSIAD-97-39 (Washington, D.C.: January 1997) and *Military Recruiting: DOD Could Improve Its Recruiter Selection and Incentive Systems*, GAO/NSIAD-98-58 (Washington, D.C.: January 1998).

recruiting irregularities? (3) What procedures are in place to address individuals involved in recruiting irregularities?

Our work covers recruiting irregularities that affect all services' active and reserve component enlisted personnel. For the purposes of this report, we define recruiter irregularities as those willful and unwillful acts of omission and improprieties that are perpetrated by a recruiter or alleged to be perpetrated by a recruiter to facilitate the recruiting process for an applicant. These recruiter irregularities range from administrative paperwork errors, to actions such as failing to disclose disqualifying eligibility criteria or instructing applicants not to reveal medical conditions or prior civil litigation, to criminal violations committed by a recruiter who is subsequently prosecuted under articles of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Criminal violations may include such actions as sexual harassment and falsifying documents. We performed our work primarily at the service recruiting commands and DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command. To answer our objectives, we examined DOD and service policies, regulations, and directives related to recruiting. We also reviewed data DOD compiled on recruiters and survey results on their opinions about their jobs. Additionally, we analyzed data the services compiled and maintained on recruiter irregularities. We also interviewed DOD and service recruiting officials, and recruiters in each service. However, we did not review irregularities within DOD's National Guard components because the National Guard Bureau does not maintain centralized data. Although we identified weaknesses in the available data, we determined that, for the purposes of this report, the data were reliable for providing limited information on recruiter irregularities. We conducted our work from September 2005 through August 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Further details on the scope and methodology are described in appendix I.

Results In Brief

DOD and the services have limited visibility to determine the extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for reviewing and evaluating plans and programs, including DOD's recruitment program. DOD, however, has not established an oversight framework that includes guidance requiring the services to maintain and report data on recruiter irregularities and criteria for characterizing irregularities and establishing common terminology. Effective federal managers continually assess and evaluate their programs to provide accountability and assurance that program objectives are being achieved. Although the services require

their recruiting commands to maintain data on recruiter irregularities, the lack of DOD criteria for characterizing irregularities and establishing common terminology makes it difficult to compare and analyze data across services. Similarly, the individual services' visibility over recruiting irregularities is problematic. The individual services use multiple data collection systems that are not integrated and their processes are decentralized, which makes it difficult to produce a comprehensive and consolidated report on recruiter irregularities. Moreover, the services do not track all allegations of recruiter wrongdoing. Accordingly, service data likely underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities. Although likely underestimated, the data the services reported to us are instructive in that they show all categories of irregularities increased from fiscal year 2004 to fiscal year 2005: allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing increased from almost 4,400 to about 6,600 cases; substantiated irregularities increased from just over 400 to almost 630 cases; and criminal violations more than doubled from just over 30 to almost 70 cases. Without a management framework that provides guidance and specific criteria to the services to track complete and reliable data, DOD and the services are not in a position to gauge the extent of recruiter irregularities or when corrective action is needed, nor is the department in a sound position to assure Congress and the general public that it knows the full extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring.

A number of factors within the current recruiting environment may contribute to recruiting irregularities. For example, service recruiting command officials stated that the economy has been the single most important factor recently affecting recruiting success. According to Department of Labor data, the unemployment rate fell each year between 2003 (when it was 6 percent) and 2005 (when it was 5.1 percent). The better the civilian job market, the harder DOD must compete for talent. Also, almost three-quarters of active duty recruiters responding to the department's 2005 internal survey believed that ongoing hostilities in Iraq made it hard for them to achieve their goals.[4] These factors, in addition to the typical challenges of the job, such as long, demanding work hours and pressure to meet monthly goals, may lead to recruiter irregularities. Moreover, performance measures vary among the services. The Army,

[4]The response rate for the DOD internal survey was 46 percent. Because DOD did not conduct a nonresponse bias analysis, we cannot determine whether estimates from this survey may be affected by nonresponse bias. Such bias might arise if nonrespondents' answers to survey items would have been systematically different from those of respondents.

Navy, and Air Force measure recruiter performance primarily by the number of recruits who enlist and report to basic training, rather than the number who complete basic training, while the Marine Corps uses basic training attrition rates as a key component of the recruiter's performance evaluation. This criterion may deter Marine Corps recruiters from committing recruiter violations because they are expected to perform more rigorous screening of applicants to prevent them from recruiting someone who cannot complete basic training and avoid the requirement to recruit an additional applicant. DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command data show, in fact, that Marine Corps applicants have a lower rate of attrition throughout the recruiting process than the other services. Other Military Entrance Processing Command data from its Chicago station suggest that recruiter irregularities increase as the end of monthly recruiting cycles near. In our January 1997 and January 1998 reports on military recruiting,[5] we recommended that the services link recruiter awards and incentives more closely to recruits' successful completion of basic training. Although DOD concurred with our recommendation, it has not made this a requirement across the services. Recruiter irregularities can result in wasted taxpayer dollars when ineligible applicants are recruited and processed through a military entrance processing station, begin basic training, but do not enter military service.

The services have procedures in place, provided in the Uniform Code of Military Justice and service regulations, to investigate allegations of recruiter irregularities and to prosecute and discipline recruiters found guilty of violating recruiting policies and procedures. Each service recruiting command has a designated investigative authority to handle allegations and service-identified incidents of irregularities, and the services' respective Judge Advocates have primary responsibility for adjudicating criminal violations of the recruiting process. Each commander in the recruiter's chain of command has the discretion to dispose of offenses within the limits of that commander's authority and parameters of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. To help recruiters better understand the nature and consequences of committing irregularities in the recruitment process, all services use available information on recruiter wrongdoing to update their recruiter training. This information includes results of internal inspection programs and routine recruiter discipline reports. The services also react to reassure public confidence in the

[5]GAO/NSIAD-97-39 and GAO/NSIAD-98-58.

recruiting process when specific incidents or reports of recruiter irregularities become widely known.

We are making recommendations that would improve DOD's visibility over recruiting irregularities and require the services to develop systems and processes that better capture and integrate data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. We are also recommending that the Military Entrance Processing Command provide information on recruiter irregularities to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with three of our recommendations that address the need for an effective oversight management framework to improve DOD's visibility over recruiter irregularities, and partially concurred with our recommendation to establish a reporting requirement across the services. DOD did not concur with our recommendation for the Military Entrance Processing Command to provide the Office of the Secretary of Defense with data on recruiter irregularities. However, the department did not disagree with the substance of these recommendations; rather, DOD indicated that it would implement the recommendations if it determined such requirements were necessary. DOD's comments and our evaluation of them are discussed on page 36. DOD's comments are included in their entirety in appendix II.

Background

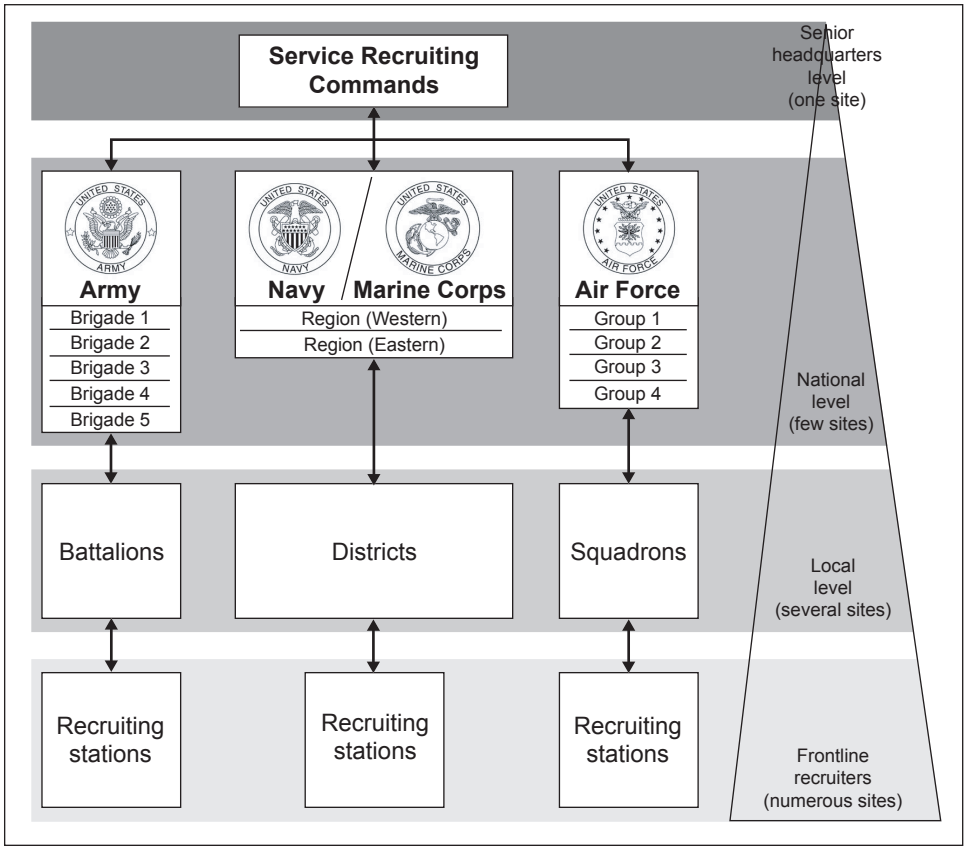
Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, each military service (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) has the responsibility to recruit and train a force to conduct military operations.[6] In fiscal year 2006, DOD committed over $1.5 billion to its recruiting effort.[7] Each service, in turn, has established a recruiting command responsible for

[6]Each of the military departments has the responsibility to recruit its own forces, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. Secretary of the Army, 10 U.S.C. § 3013(b)(1); Secretary of the Navy, 10 U.S.C. § 5013(b)(1); Secretary of the Air Force, 10 U.S.C. § 8013(b)(1).

[7]DOD's collective recruiting budgets for fiscal year 2006 include $800.7 million for its recruiting programs, $663 million for advertising, and $551.6 million for financial incentives, such as enlistment or selective reenlistment bonuses.

that service's recruiting mission and functions.[8] The services' recruiting commands are similarly organized, in general, to accomplish the recruiting mission. Figure 1 illustrates the organization of the recruiting commands from the senior headquarters level through the recruiting station where frontline recruiters work to contact prospective applicants and sell them on military service.

Figure 1: Service Recruiting Command Organizational Chart



Source: GAO analysis based on service-provided organizational structures.

[8]The Army Recruiting Command is located at Fort Knox, Kentucky; the Navy Recruiting Command is located in Millington, Tenn.; the Marine Corps Recruiting Command is located at Quantico, Va.; and the Air Force Recruiting Service is located at Randolph Air Force Base, Tex. The Department of the Air Force is the only military department in which the recruiting commands for the active and reserve force are still separate commands.

Notes: The Marine Corps organization also includes substations beneath the recruiting station level where its frontline recruiters work. The Department of the Air Force is the only military department in which the recruiting commands for the active and reserve force are still separate commands. The Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service is similarly organized as the active component and is not depicted separately.

Each service has at least two levels of command between the senior headquarters and the recruiting station where frontline recruiters work to contact prospective applicants for military service. The Army Brigades, Navy and Marine Corps Regions, and Air Force Groups are subordinate commands of their service recruiting command and have responsibility for recruiting operations in large portions of the country. The Navy and Marine Corps organize their servicewide recruiting commands into Eastern and Western Regions that more or less divide responsibilities east and west of the Mississippi River. The Army, in comparison, has five Brigades and the Air Force has four Groups based regionally across the country that are responsible for their recruiting operations. These commands are further divided into local levels responsible for coordinating the frontline recruiting efforts. These 41 Army Battalions, 26 Navy and 6 Marine Corps Districts, and 28 Air Force Squadrons are generally organized around market demographics, including population density and geographic location. Finally, the 1,200 to 2,000 recruiting stations per service or in the case of the Marine Corps—the substations—represent that part of the recruiting organization with which the general public is most familiar.

Of the approximately 22,000 total military recruiters in fiscal year 2006, almost 14,000 are frontline recruiters who are assigned a monthly recruiting goal. The recruiter's monthly goal varies by service, but is generally 2 recruits per month. The remaining recruiters—roughly 8,000—hold supervisory and staff positions throughout the services' recruiting commands. Table 1 provides a summary of the average number of recruiters by service for fiscal years 2002 through 2006 broken out by total number of recruiters and frontline recruiters who have a monthly recruiting goal.

Table 1: Summary of the Average Recruiters by Service for Fiscal Years 2002 through 2006

	Total recruiters					Frontline recruiters				
Service	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Army[a]	9,730	9,481	8,517	9,637	10,634	6,367	6,078	5,109	5,953	6,484
Navy	5,835	5,738	5,016	5,141	4,936	4,714	4,617	4,617	3,365	3,383
Marine Corps	3,401	3,494	3,287	3,343	3,641	2,650	2,650	2,650	2,650	2,650
Air Force	2,942	2,956	2,940	2,990	2,800	1,574	1,494	1,460	1,453	1,412
Total	**21,908**	**21,669**	**19,760**	**21,111**	**22,011**	**15,305**	**14,839**	**13,836**	**13,421**	**13,929**

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense.

[a] The number of Army recruiters includes civilian contract recruiters.

A typical frontline military recruiter is generally a midlevel enlisted noncommissioned officer in the rank of Army and Marine Corps Sergeant (E-5) or Staff Sergeant (E-6), Navy Petty Officer Second Class (E-5) or First Class (E-6), and Air Force Staff Sergeant (E-5) or Technical Sergeant (E-6), who is between the ages of 25 and 30 years old and has between 5 and 10 years of military service. While some frontline recruiters volunteer for recruiting as a career enhancement, others are selected from among those the services have identified as their best performers in their primary military specialties. All services have comprehensive selection processes in place and specific eligibility criteria for recruiting duty. For example, recruiters must meet service appearance standards, have a stable family situation, be able to speak without any impairment, and be financially responsible. The services screen all prospective recruiters by interviewing and conducting personality assessments and ensuring the prospective recruiters meet all criteria.

To augment its uniformed recruiters, the Army also uses contract civilian recruiters, and has been doing so under legislative authority since fiscal year 2001. This pilot program, which authorizes the Army to use civilian contractors, will run through fiscal year 2007. The goal of the program is to test the effectiveness of civilian recruiters. If civilian recruiters prove effective, this would allow the Army to retain more noncommissioned officers in their primary military specialties within the warfighting force. Currently, the Army is using almost 370 contract civilian recruiters, representing approximately 3 percent of the Army's total recruiting force.

In general, training for frontline recruiters is similar in all services and has focused on ethics and salesmanship, with a growing emphasis placed on

leadership and mentoring skills to attract today's applicant. Each service conducts specialized training for approximately 6 weeks for noncommissioned officers assigned as recruiters.[9] The number of hours of training time specifically devoted to ethics training as a component of the recruiter training curriculum ranges from 5 hours in the Navy to 34 hours of instruction in the Army.

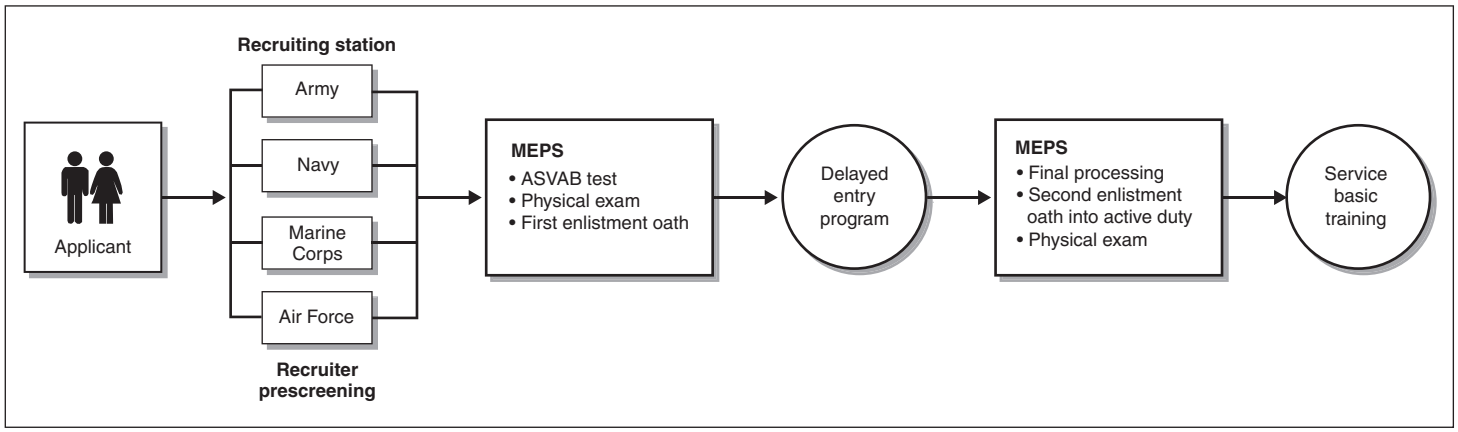
After recruiters successfully convince applicants on the benefits of joining the military, they complete a prescreening of the applicant, which includes an initial background review and a physical and moral assessment of the applicant's eligibility for military service. After the recruiter's prescreening, the military pays for the applicant to travel to 1 of 65 military entrance processing stations (MEPS) located throughout the country. At the processing stations, which are under the direction of DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command, processing station staff administer the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, a test to determine whether the applicant is qualified for enlistment and a military job specialty,[10] and conduct a medical examination to determine whether the applicant meets physical entrance standards. After the processing station staff determine that an applicant is qualified, the applicant signs an enlistment contract and is sworn into the service and enters the delayed entry program. When an applicant enters the delayed entry program, he or she becomes a member of the Individual Ready Reserve, in an unpaid status, until reporting for basic training. An individual may remain in the delayed entry program for 1 day up to 1 year. Just before reporting for basic training, the applicant returns to the processing station, undergoes a brief physical examination, and is sworn into the military.

Figure 2, in general, illustrates the recruiting process from a recruiter's initial contact with a prospective applicant to the applicant's successful graduation from the service's initial training school, commonly referred to as basic training.

[9]The Army Recruiter School is located at Ft. Jackson, S.C.; the Navy Recruiter School is located at Pensacola Naval Air Station, Fla.; the Marine Recruiter School is located at U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif.; and the Air Force Recruiter School is located at Lackland Air Force Base, Tex.

[10]In some cases, applicants are given the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test in high school or at independent sites apart from the military entrance processing stations.

Figure 2: The Recruiting Process



Source: GAO analysis of service-provided recruiting process depictions.

DOD and the Services Have Limited Visibility over Recruiter Irregularities

DOD and the services have limited visibility to determine the extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (OUSD) for Personnel and Readiness has the responsibility for overseeing the recruiting program. However, OUSD has not established a framework to conduct oversight of recruiter irregularities and provide guidance requiring the services to maintain data on recruiter wrongdoing. Although not required by OUSD to do so, the services require their recruiting commands to maintain data for 2 years; the Army Recruiting Command maintains data for 3 years and can retrieve case files back to fiscal year 1998. Furthermore, OUSD has not established criteria for the services to characterize recruiter irregularities or developed common terminology for irregularities. Accordingly, the services use different terminology, which makes it difficult to compare and analyze data across the services. Moreover, each of the services uses multiple systems for maintaining data that are not integrated and decentralized processes for identifying and tracking allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. Perhaps most significantly, none of the services accounts for all allegations or incidents of recruiter irregularities. Therefore, service data likely underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities. Nevertheless, our analysis of service data suggests that most allegations are not substantiated.

DOD Lacks an Oversight Framework to Provide Guidance on Recruiter Irregularities, and Has Not Established Criteria to Characterize Irregularities

Effective federal managers continually assess and evaluate their programs to provide accountability and to assure that they are well designed and operated, appropriately updated to meet changing conditions, and achieving program objectives. Specifically, managers need to examine internal control to determine how well it is performing, how it may be improved, and the degree to which it helps identify and address major risks for fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. According to the mission statement for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, its responsibilities include reviewing and evaluating plans and programs to ensure adherence to approved policies and standards, including DOD's recruitment program. OUSD officials stated that they review service recruiter irregularity issues infrequently usually in response to a congressional inquiry, and they do not perform oversight of recruiter irregularities. OUSD has not issued guidance requiring the services to maintain data on recruiter irregularities. Nevertheless, the services require their recruiting commands to maintain data on recruiter irregularities for 2 years; the Army Recruiting Command maintains data for 3 years and can retrieve case files dating back to fiscal year 1998.

Moreover, OUSD has not established or provided criteria to the services for how they should characterize various recruiter irregularities and has not developed common terminology because it responds to individual inquiries and, in general, uses the terminology of the service in question. Accordingly, the services use different terminology to refer to recruiter irregularities. How the services categorize the irregularity affects how they maintain data on recruiter irregularities. For example, the Army uses the term impropriety while the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force use the term malpractice to characterize the intentional enlistment of an unqualified applicant. Only the Army uses the term recruiter error to describe those irregularities not resulting from malicious intent or gross negligence. Consequently, if DOD were to require services to report on recruiter wrongdoing, the Army might not include its recruiter error category because these cases are not willful violations of recruiting policies and procedures and the Army does not identify such cases as substantiated or unsubstantiated in their data system. The Air Force uses the term procedural error to refer to an irregularity occurring as a result of an administrative error by the recruiter due to lack of knowledge or inattention to detail. If DOD were to require services to report on recruiter wrongdoing, the Air Force might not include its procedural error category because these cases are not intentional acts to facilitate the recruiting process for an ineligible applicant. In both cases, however, wasted taxpayer dollars result; unintentional recruiter errors can have the same effect as

intentional recruiter irregularities because both result in inefficiencies in the recruiting process.

DOD's need for oversight may become more critical if the department decides to rely more heavily on civilian contract recruiters in the future. As we previously stated, the civilian recruiter pilot program currently authorizes the Army to use civilian recruiters, through fiscal year 2007, to test their effectiveness. Future reliance on civilian recruiters, in any service, would allow a service to retain more noncommissioned officers in their primary military specialties. However, OUSD would also need to be in a position to assure that this type of change is well designed and operated, and that its recruiting programs are appropriately updated to reflect a change in recruiting operations.

Each Service Uses Systems That Are Not Integrated and Do Not Allow the Services to Readily Report All Recruiter Irregularities

None of the services can readily provide a comprehensive and consolidated report on recruiter irregularities within their own service because they use multiple systems that are not integrated. Currently, the services use systems that range from electronic databases to hard-copy paper files to track recruiter irregularities and do not have a central database dedicated to compiling, monitoring, and archiving information about recruiter irregularities. When we asked officials in each of the services for a comprehensive report of recruiter irregularities that occurred within their own service, they were unable to readily provide these data. Officials had to query and compile data from separate systems. For example, the Navy Recruiting Command had to access paper files for allegations of recruiter irregularities, while the Air Force Judge Advocate provided information from an electronic database from which we were able to extract cases specifically related to recruiter irregularities.

Furthermore, the services cannot assure the reliability of their data because the services lack standardized procedures for recording data, their multiple systems use different formats for maintaining data, and in some instances the services do not conduct quality reviews or edit checks of the data. The services used the following systems to maintain data on recruiter irregularities at the time of our review:

- Army: The Army maintains three separate data systems that contain information about recruiter irregularities. The Army Recruiting Command's Enlistment Standards Division has a database that houses recruiting irregularities that pertain to applicant eligibility. The Army Recruiting Command Inspector General maintains a separate database that houses other irregularities, including recruiter misconduct that may result in nonjudicial punishment. The Judge Advocate maintains hard-copy case files for recruiter irregularities that are criminal violations of the recruiting process that may result in judicial punishment.

- Navy: The Navy maintains four separate data systems that contain information about recruiter irregularities. The Naval Inspector General, the Navy Bureau of Personnel Inspector General, and the Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General all maintain some data on allegations of recruiter irregularities. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigates and maintains data on Navy criminal recruiting violations.

- Marine Corps: The Marine Corps Recruiting Command maintains two systems that track information on recruiting irregularities, one that captures reported allegations and another that only tracks the disposition of allegations and service-identified incidents that a commander or recruiting official at some level in the recruiting command structure determined to merit an inquiry or investigation. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigates and maintains data on Marine Corps criminal recruiting violations.

- Air Force: The Air Force maintains three separate databases with information about recruiter irregularities. The Air Force Recruiting Service Inspector General maintains a database that houses data on allegations of recruiter irregularities. The liaison from the Air Force Recruiting Service, located at the Air Force basic training site, maintains data within a separate electronic system on allegations of recruiter irregularities that applicants raise about their recruiters when they report to basic training. The Air Force Judge Advocate maintains a

database containing criminal violations of recruiting practices and procedures.[11]

At the time of our review, Navy officials told us they believe there is value in having servicewide visibility over the recruiting process and they plan to improve their systems for maintaining data on recruiter irregularities. Navy officials stated that the Navy Bureau of Personnel Inspector General is working with the Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General and the Naval Education and Training Command to develop a system that maintains recruiting and training data that will include allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. Marine Corps officials told us they are in the process of improving their systems for maintaining data on recruiter irregularities by merging all data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities into one database that can be accessed at all command levels of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. An Air Force official told us that as a result of our review, the Air Force modified its system for capturing allegations and service-identified incidents surfacing at basic training by improving its ability to query the system for information on the type of allegation or incident and whether or not it was a substantiated case of recruiter wrongdoing.

Services' Decentralized Processes Do Not Allow Them to Account for All Recruiter Irregularities

Where and how an irregularity is identified will often determine where and how it will be resolved. The services identify an allegation or incident of recruiter wrongdoing in a number of ways. These include input from service hotlines, internal inspections, congressional inquiries, and data collected by DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command. The services' recruiting command headquarters typically handle allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities that surface through any of these means during the recruiting process. At other times, allegations surface in the recruiting process at command levels below the service recruiting command headquarters, and commanders at the Army Battalion, Navy and Marine Corps District, and Air Force Squadron level handle allegations that typically surface during supervisory reviews at the

[11]The Department of the Air Force is the only military department in which the recruiting commands for the active and reserve force are still separate commands. For the purposes of this report, we combined Air Force and Air Force Reserve data on irregularities but only refer to Air Force systems and processes for managing information on recruiter irregularities.

recruiting stations and substations. We were unable to determine the extent of these allegations, however, because the service recruiting commands do not maintain complete data. For example, Military Entrance Processing Command officials, responsible for assessing an applicant's moral, mental, and physical eligibility for military service, stated that they forward all allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities that surface during the screening process at the military entrance processing station to the services' recruiting commanders. However, officials also stated that the services' recruiting commanders do not provide feedback to them regarding the disposition of these cases. In fact, the services' recruiting command headquarters data did not show records of allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities received from the Military Entrance Processing Command.

Additionally, each service provides applicants an opportunity to disclose any special circumstances relating to their enlistment process, including allegations of recruiter wrongdoing, when they enter basic training. Army and Air Force officials told us that they record all allegations of recruiter irregularities made by applicants at basic training. Army Recruiting Command officials stated that liaison officers at each of the basic training installations forward all allegations received from applicants to the Army Recruiting Command Enlisted Standards Division to record in its database. The Air Force implemented a new database in fiscal year 2005 specifically to record and resolve all allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing that surface at basic training. The Navy and Marine Corps, on the other hand, do not record all allegations of recruiter irregularities made by applicants at basic training.

- Navy: The Navy gives applicants a final opportunity to disclose any irregularity that they believe occurred in their recruiting process when they arrive at basic training. The Recruiting Command Inspector General has the authority to investigate allegations or service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing and uses its Navy Recruit Quality Assurance Team to conduct the final Navy recruiting quality assurance check before applicants begin basic training. In turn, the Assurance Team generates reports on allegations raised by applicants who claim they were misled during the recruiting process and submits its reports to the Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General. Navy recruiting command officials explained that the Inspector General investigates those allegations that the Assurance Team, based on the professional judgment and experience of its team members, recommends for further investigation. The Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General,

however, does not maintain data on allegations that it does not investigate. The Assurance Team also sends its reports to the Navy Recruiting District Commanders who are responsible for overseeing the recruiters who appear on the reports. The District Commanders use the Assurance Team's reports to monitor recruiter wrongdoing. Again, however, the District Commanders do not provide feedback to the Assurance Team as to how they resolve these allegations, nor do they report this information to the Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General unless they deem the case to merit further investigation or judicial processing. Moreover, the Assurance Team members do not record allegations of wrongdoing as a recruiter irregularity in those cases where they can easily resolve the discrepancy by granting an applicant an enlistment waiver to begin basic training. Assurance Team officials told us that they believe that some recruiters encourage applicants to conceal potentially disqualifying information until they arrive at basic training because the recruiters perceive that it is relatively easy to process a waiver at basic training. In addition, these same officials told us that this behavior saves recruiters the burden of collecting supporting documentation and expedites the time it takes a recruiter to sign a contract with an applicant and complete the recruiting process.

- Marine Corps: The Marine Corps also gives applicants a final opportunity to disclose any irregularity that they believe occurred in their recruiting process prior to beginning basic training. However, the Marine Corps' Eastern and Western Recruiting Region staff use different criteria to handle allegations of recruiter irregularities that they cannot corroborate. Recruiting staff at the Eastern Region basic training site in Parris Island, South Carolina, enter all allegations applicants make against recruiters, while recruiting staff at the Western Region basic training site in San Diego, California, only enter those allegations that a third party can verify. A Marine Corps Recruiting Command official told us that, as a result of our review, Marine Corps officials discussed accounting procedures for allegations of recruiter irregularities at the command's national operations conference held in May 2006. The official further stated that the Marine Corps Recruiting Command's goal is to standardize procedures to account for all allegations of recruiter irregularities.

Although Likely Underestimated, Service Data Suggest Most Allegations Are Not Substantiated

Existing data suggest that substantiated cases of recruiter wrongdoing make up a small percent of all allegations and service-identified incidents, although, for reasons previously cited, we believe the service data likely underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities. Substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities are those cases in which the services determined a recruiter violated recruiting policies or procedures based on a review of the facts of the case. (A more detailed discussion of the procedures that are in place to address substantiated cases of recruiter irregularity are discussed later in this report.) While the services cannot assure that they have a complete accounting of recruiter irregularities, the data that they reported to us are instructive in that they show the number of allegations, substantiated cases, and criminal violations increased overall from fiscal year 2004 to fiscal year 2005. At the same time, the number of accessions into the military decreased from just under 250,000 in fiscal year 2004 to about 215,000 in fiscal year 2005.

Table 2 shows that, DOD-wide, the services substantiated about 10 percent of all allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. The services categorized cases as substantiated when the preponderance of the evidence supported the allegation of wrongdoing against a recruiter. Similarly, the services categorized cases as unsubstantiated when the preponderance of the evidence did not support the allegation against a recruiter.

Table 2: Recruiter Irregularities by Service for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005 That Are Unsubstantiated, Substantiated, or Other[a]

		Irregularities[b]	Unsubstantiated	Substantiated	Other[c]
FY 2004	Army	1,037	682 (66%)	121 (12%)	234 (23%)
	Navy	1,482	296 (20)	245 (17)	941 (63)
	Marine Corps	1,840	162 (9)	28 (2)	1,650 (90)
	Air Force	29	14 (48)	15 (52)	0
	Total	**4,388**	**1,154 (26%)**	**409 (9%)**	**2,825 (64%)**
FY 2005	Army	913	551(60)	123 (13)	239 (26)
	Navy	2,397	513 (21)	226 (9)	1,658 (69)
	Marine Corps	1,877	227 (12)	32 (2)	1,582 (84)
	Air Force[d]	1,415	127 (9)	248 (18)	1,034 (73)
	Total	**6,602**	**1,418 (21%)**	**629 (10%)**	**4,513 (68%)**

Source: GAO analysis based on information provided by the services.

[a]Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding.

[b]Data include allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities for both the active and reserve components. For the purpose of this report, we combined the Air Force active and reserve data because the Air Force is the only service that has separate active and reserve recruiting commands and therefore maintains these data separately.

[c]Army data we categorized as other includes those irregularities that the Army has defined as unintentional recruiter error and cases of unresolved intentional recruiter misconduct, which were forwarded to either the Army Recruiting Command Inspector General for investigation or Judge Advocate for judicial processing. Navy data that we categorized as other are uncorroborated allegations recorded by the Navy's Recruit Quality Assurance Team and not investigated. Marine Corps data we categorized as other are those allegations that Marine Corps officials determined not to merit an official investigation following a preliminary review and therefore did not report as either substantiated or unsubstantiated allegations. Air Force data that we categorized as other include those cases where the Air Force determined someone other than the applicant or the recruiter to be at fault.

[d]Some of the increase in Air Force irregularities is at least partially a result of implementing a new tracking system in fiscal year 2005 that now captures allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities, and other issues that surface at basic training.

Table 3 shows the number of recruiter irregularities that were criminal violations of the recruiting process and addressed by the services' Judge Advocate or criminal investigative service. The number of criminal violations in the recruiting process increased in fiscal year 2005; however, in both fiscal years, this number represented approximately 1 percent of all allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. The large increase in the number of Navy cases in fiscal year 2005 is likely a result of a special investigation where four cases led to nine additional cases of criminal wrongdoing.

Table 3: Cases of Recruiter Criminal Violations in Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005 by Service

Service	FY 2004	FY 2005
Army	19	38
Navy	1	13
Marine Corps	0	2
Air Force	11	12
Total	**33**	**68**

Source: GAO analysis based on information provided by the services.

Table 4 shows that on average, the percentage of substantiated cases of recruiter wrongdoing compared to the number of actual accessions was under 1 percent in each service during the past 2 fiscal years.

Table 4: Substantiated Irregularities as a Percentage of Actual Accessions by Service for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005

	FY 2004		FY 2005	
Service	**Accessions**	**Substantiated irregularities[a]**	**Accessions**	**Substantiated irregularities[a]**
Army	110,296	121 (0.11%)	97,232	123 (0.13%)
Navy	51,117	245 (0.48)	47,491	226 (0.48)
Marine Corps	38,866	28 (0.07)	41,311	32 (0.08)
Air Force[b]	43,265	15 (0.03)	29,164	248 (0.85)
Total	**243,544**	**409 (0.17%)**	**215,198**	**629 (0.29%)**

Source: GAO analysis based on information provided by the services. Accessions data obtained from GAO, Military Personnel: DOD Needs Action Plan to Address Enlisted Personnel Recruitment and Retention Challenges, GAO-06-134 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 17, 2005).

[a]Data include substantiated allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities for both the active and reserve components. For the purpose of this report, we combined the Air Force active and reserve data as the Air Force is the only service that has separate active and reserve recruiting commands and therefore maintains these data separately.

[b]Some of the increase in Air Force data is at least partially a result of implementing of a new tracking system in fiscal year 2005 that now captures allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities, and other issues that surface at basic training.

Table 5 shows that when we compared the number of substantiated cases of recruiter wrongdoing to the number of frontline recruiters, 4.7 percent of recruiters would have had a substantiated case against them in fiscal year 2005 if each recruiter who committed an irregularity had committed only one. (However, this is not to say that 4.7 percent of frontline recruiters

committed an irregularity, given that some recruiters may have committed more than one irregularity).

Table 5: Irregularities as a Percentage of Recruiters by Service for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005

	FY 2004		FY 2005	
Service	**Recruiters**	**Substantiated irregularities[a]**	**Recruiters**	**Substantiated irregularities[a]**
Army	5,109	121 (2.4%)	5,953	123 (2.1%)
Navy	4,617	245 (5.3)	3,365	226 (6.7)
Marine Corps	2,650	28 (1.1)	2,650	32 (1.2)
Air Force[b]	1,460	15 (1.0)	1,453	248 (17.1)
Total	**13,836**	**409 (3.0%)**	**13,421**	**629 (4.7%)**

Source: GAO analysis based on information provided by the services. Data on recruiters obtained from DOD.

[a]Data include allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities for both the active and reserve components. For the purpose of this report, we combined the Air Force active and reserve data as the Air Force is the only service that has separate active and reserve recruiting commands and therefore maintains these data separately.

[b]Some of the increase in Air Force irregularities is at least partially a result of implementing a new tracking system in fiscal year 2005 that now captures allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities, and other issues that surface at basic training.

Without an oversight framework to provide complete and reliable data, DOD and the services are not in a position to gauge the extent of recruiter irregularities or when corrective action is needed, nor is the department in a sound position to give Congress and the general public assurance that recruiter irregularities are being addressed.

Many Factors May Affect the Recruiting Environment

A number of factors within the current recruiting environment may contribute to recruiting irregularities. Such factors include the economy, ongoing hostilities in Iraq, and fewer applicants who can meet military entrance standards. These factors, coupled with the typical difficulties of the job and pressure to meet monthly recruiting goals, challenge the recruiter and can lead to recruiter irregularities in the recruiting process. Data show that as the end of the monthly recruiting cycle draws near, the number of recruiter irregularities may increase.

Many Factors Contribute to a Challenging Recruiting Environment

Among a number of factors that contribute to a challenging recruiting environment are the current economic situation and the ongoing hostilities in Iraq. Service recruiting officials told us that the state of the economy, specifically the low unemployment rate, has had the single largest effect recently on meeting recruiting goals. These officials stated DOD must compete harder for qualified talent to join the military when the economy is strong. According to U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the national unemployment rate fell each year between 2003 (when it was at 6 percent) and 2005 (when it was 5.1 percent). In fiscal year 2005, three of the eight active and reserve components we reviewed—the Army, Army Reserve, and Navy Reserve—failed to meet their recruiting goals.

Recruiters also believe that the ongoing hostilities in Iraq have made their job harder. Results of a DOD internal survey show that almost three-quarters of active duty recruiters agreed with the statement that current military operations made it hard for them to achieve recruiting goals and missions.[12] Recruiters we interviewed expressed the same opinion. DOD has found that the public's perceptions about military enlistment have changed because youth and their parents believe that deployment to a hostile environment is very likely for servicemembers with some types of military specialties.[13] Officials further stated that adults who influence a prospective applicant's decision about whether to join the military are increasingly fearful of the possibility of death or serious injury to the applicant.

Recruiters also must overcome specific factors that routinely make their job hard. Recruiters told us that their work hours were dictated by the schedules of prospective high school applicants, which meant working most evenings and weekends. Almost three-quarters of active duty recruiters who responded to DOD's survey stated that they worked more than 60 hours a week on recruiting or recruiting-related duties. Other

[12]The DOD 2005 Recruiter Quality of Life Survey is the seventh survey conducted since 1989, and the first survey administered in the past 5 years, dealing with recruiters' opinions about their job. The response rate for the DOD internal survey was 46 percent. Because DOD did not conduct a nonresponse bias analysis, we cannot determine whether estimates from this survey may be affected by nonresponse bias. Such bias might arise if nonrespondents' answers to survey items would have been systematically different from those of respondents.

[13]GAO, *Military Personnel: Reporting Additional Servicemember Democraphics Could Enhance Congressional Oversight*, GAO-05-952 (Washington, D.C.: September 2005).

factors that affect the recruiting environment include a recruiter's location and access to eligible applicants. For example, service officials stated that it was easier to recruit in or near locations with a military presence. Recruiters also have difficulty finding eligible applicants. DOD researchers have estimated that over half of U.S. youth aged 16 to 21 are ineligible to join the military because they cannot meet DOD or service entry standards.[14] DOD officials stated that the inability to meet medical and physical requirements accounts for much of the reason youth are ineligible for military service. Additionally, many youth are ineligible because they cannot meet service standards for education, as indicated by DOD's preference for recruits with a high school diploma; mental aptitude, as indicated by receipt of an acceptable score on the armed forces vocational aptitude test; and moral character, as indicated by few or no criminal convictions or antisocial behavior. All of these factors contribute to a difficult recruiting environment that is challenging for recruiters to succeed.

Pressure to meet monthly goals contributes to recruiter dissatisfaction. Over 50 percent of active duty military recruiters responding to the 2005 internal DOD survey stated that they were dissatisfied with their jobs. Approximately two-thirds of Army recruiters reported that they were dissatisfied with recruiting, while over a third of Air Force recruiters stated they were dissatisfied. The Navy and Marine Corps rates of recruiter dissatisfaction fell within these extremes, with just under half of Navy and Marine Corps recruiters reporting that they were dissatisfied with their jobs. When asked in this same survey if they would select another assignment if they had the freedom to do so, over three-quarters of active duty DOD recruiters said they would not remain in recruiting.

On the one hand, the services expect recruiters to recruit fully qualified personnel; while on the other hand, the services primarily evaluate recruiters' performance on the number of contracts they write, which corresponds to the number of applicants who enter the delayed entry program each month. In 2005, over two-thirds of those active duty recruiters responding to the internal DOD survey believed that their success in making their monthly quota for enlistment contracts had a make-or-break effect on their military career. Over 80 percent of Marine Corps recruiters held that opinion, as did almost two-thirds of Army and

[14]National Research Council, *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations of American Youth;* DOD, *Overview Report June 2003 Youth Poll 5 (*December 2003), p. 71.

over half of Air Force recruiters. Navy officials stated that individual recruiters are not tasked with a monthly goal; rather, the goal belongs to the recruiting station as a whole. Still, approximately two-thirds of Navy recruiters responding to DOD's survey indicated they felt their careers were affected by their success in making their individual recruiting goal. The recruiters who we interviewed also believed their careers were affected by how successful they were in achieving monthly recruiting goals.

Recruiter Evaluations Are Linked to Monthly Recruiting Results

Recruiters, like all servicemembers, receive performance evaluations at least once a year. Our review of service performance evaluations and conversations with the services' recruiting command officials show that Army, Navy, and Air Force recruiter evaluations are not directly linked to an applicant successfully completing his or her service's basic training course. Instead, we found that the Army, Navy, and Air Force generally evaluate recruiters on their ability to achieve their monthly goal to write contracts to bring applicants into the delayed entry program. The Army's civilian contractor recruiters, for example, receive approximately 75 percent of their monetary compensation for recruiting an applicant when that applicant enters the delayed entry program and the remaining 25 percent of their compensation when the applicant begins basic training. The Army's contract, therefore, does not tie compensation to the applicant's successful completion of basic training and joining the Army. Even though Navy officials told us that recruiters do not have individual goals because the monthly mission is assigned to the recruiting station, Navy performance metrics include data on the number of contracts written. However, the Navy does not hold recruiters directly accountable for attrition rates from either the delayed entry program or basic training.

Marine Corps recruiters, unlike recruiters in the other services, are held accountable when an applicant does not complete basic training and remain responsible for recruiting an additional applicant to replace the former basic trainee. Marine Corps recruiter evaluation performance standards measure both the number of contracts written each month as well as attrition rates of applicants from the delayed entry program and basic training. Marine Corps Recruiting Command officials stated that they believe their practice of holding recruiters accountable for attrition rates helps to limit irregularities because recruiters are likely to perform more rigorous prescreening of applicants to ensure that a recruit is likely to complete Marine Corps basic training. In fact, Military Entrance Processing Command data show that Marine Corps recruiters have been the most

consistently successful of all service recruiters at prescreening and processing applicants through their initial physical assessments, subsequently maintaining applicants' physical eligibility while in the delayed entry program, and finally ensuring that applicants pass the final physical assessment and enter basic training. Table 6 shows the low medical disqualification rate of the Marine Corps in comparison with the other services.

Table 6: Disqualifications by Service from Fiscal Year 2003 through Fiscal Year 2005

Percentage of total Military Entrance Processing Station medical disqualifications			
	2003	2004	2005
Army	6.3	4.6	4.7
Navy	5.0	3.3	3.7
Marine Corps	3.9	2.6	2.4
Air Force	4.9	3.6	4.1

Source: GAO analysis of Military Entrance Processing Command data.

Note: Applicants who were disqualified but were able to obtain a medical waiver are not included in the percent of disqualifications.

In addition to performance evaluations, the services provide awards to recruiters that are generally based on the number of contracts that a recruiter writes, rather than on the number of applicants that graduate from basic training and join the military. We reported in 1998 that only the Marine Corps and the Navy used recruits' basic training graduation rates as key criteria when evaluating recruiters for awards.[15] Recruiters in some services and other service recruiting command officials stated their belief that recruiters who write large numbers of contracts over and above their monthly quota are almost always rewarded. Such rewards can include medals and trophies for recruiter of the month, quarter, or year; preferential duty stations for their next assignment; incentives such as paid vacations; and meritorious promotion to the next rank.

When unqualified applicants are recruited or when applicants who lack eligibility documentation are processed through the military entrance processing station in the effort to satisfy end-of-month recruiting cycle goals, wasted taxpayer dollars result. For example, the Army spends

[15]GAO/NSIAD-98-58.

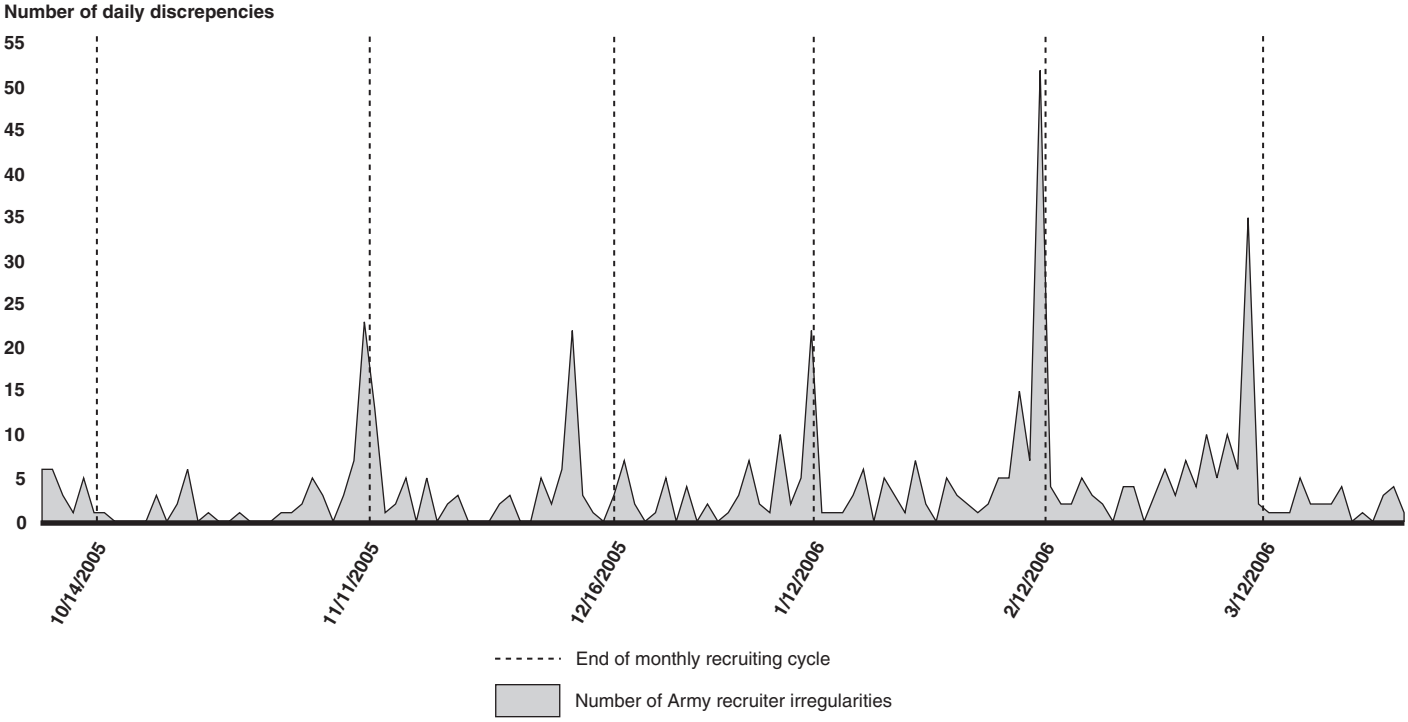
approximately $17,000 to recruit and process one applicant, and as much as $57,500 to recruit and train that applicant through basic training.

We continue to believe our 1997 and 1998 recommendations to the Secretary of Defense have merit. Specifically, we recommended that the Secretary of Defense require all the services to review and revise their recruiter performance evaluation and award systems to strengthen incentives for recruiters to thoroughly prescreen applicants and to more closely link recruiting quotas to applicants' successful completion of basic training. The department concurred with our recommendations in order to enhance recruiter success and help recruiters focus on DOD's strategic retention goal, and it indicated that the Secretary of Defense would instruct the services to link recruiter awards more closely to recruits' successful completion of basic training. Our review shows that the Army, Navy, and Air Force have not implemented this recommendation.

Recruiter Irregularities May Increase as the Deadline to Meet Monthly Goals Nears

DOD Military Entrance Processing Command officials told us that they believe data from the Chicago military entrance processing station for the first 6 months of fiscal year 2006 indicate that it may be possible to anticipate when irregularities may occur. While service data show that the numbers of irregularities that occur in the recruiting process are relatively small when compared with the total number of applicants that access into the military, the Chicago station data suggest that recruiter irregularities increase as the end of the monthly recruiting cycle nears and recruiting goals are tallied. The end-of-month recruiting cycle for the Army occurs midmonth and data from DOD's Chicago processing station show that irregularities peaked at the midmonth point. Figure 3 illustrates the increase in recruiter irregularities that occurred at the Chicago station at the end of the Army's monthly recruiting cycle. We present Army data because the Chicago station processes more applicants for the Army than it does for the other services. However, Chicago station data show similar results for the Navy, Marines, and Air Force.

Figure 3: Recruiter Irregularities Occurring at the End of the Army Monthly Recruiting Cycles



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command data.

When we asked U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command officials for data from the other stations, they said that the other stations did not maintain these data and that this data collection effort was the initiative of the Chicago station commander. We believe these data can be instructive and inform recruiting command officials whether monthly goals have an adverse affect on recruiter behaviors, and if so, whether actions to address increases in irregularities near the end of the monthly recruiting cycle may be necessary.

Services Have Standard Procedures in Place for Administering Military Justice to Address Recruiter Irregularities

The services have standard procedures in place, provided in the Uniform Code of Military Justice and service regulations, to investigate allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities and to prosecute and discipline recruiters found guilty of violating recruiting policies and procedures. Each service recruiting command has a designated investigative authority to handle allegations of irregularities, and the services' respective Judge Advocates have primary responsibility for adjudicating criminal violations of the recruitment process. Moreover, each service has mechanisms by which to update its recruiter training as a result of information on recruiter irregularities.

As previously discussed, the services identify allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing in a number of ways. Allegations made or discovered at the Army Battalion, Navy and Marine Corps District, and Air Force Squadron command level are generally resolved by that commander using administrative actions and nonjudicial punishment under authority granted by the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. The commander forwards allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities arising at that level that he or she deems sufficiently egregious to require further investigation, or as service regulations require, to the service recruiting command or to the Judge Advocate for judicial processing of possible criminal violations in the recruitment process.

Commanders in the service recruiting commands, like all commanders throughout the military, exercise discretion in deciding whether a servicemember should be charged with an offense, just as prosecutors do in the civilian justice system. Army Battalion, Navy and Marine Corps District, and Air Force Squadron commanders initiate a preliminary inquiry into allegations of wrongdoing against recruiters after receiving a report of a possible recruiter irregularity.[16] When the preliminary inquiry is complete, the commander must make a decision on how to resolve the case. The commander can decide that no action is warranted or take administrative action, such as a reprimand or counseling. The commander can also decide to pursue nonjudicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of

[16]Commanders conduct preliminary inquiries under the Rules for Courts-Martial (R.C.M.) found in the Manual for Courts-Martial. These informal inquiries are sometimes referred to as R.C.M. 303 Inquiries.

Military Justice,[17] or refer the case to trial and decide what charges will be brought against the recruiter.

Limitations in data we previously discussed prevent a thorough review of how services discipline recruiters found guilty of violating recruiting policies and procedures. In addition, we found that in some cases, the services did not document the disciplinary action a commander took against a recruiter. Even though service data are not complete, data the Army provided allow us to illustrate the range of disciplinary actions commanders may take to resolve cases of recruiter irregularities. These actions range from counseling a recruiter for an irregularity up to discharge from the Army. For example, in fiscal year 2005, Army data show that commanders imposed disciplinary actions ranging from a verbal reprimand to court martial for recruiters who concealed an applicant's medical information. Service recruiting officials stated that the range of possible disciplinary actions a commander may impose is mitigated by the circumstances of each case, including the recruiter's overall service record, duty performance, and number of irregularities the recruiter may have previously committed. Table 7 summarizes disciplinary actions taken against Army recruiters in the past 2 fiscal years for specific kinds of irregularities.

[17]Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, is intended to handle minor offenses. A minor offense is one for which the maximum sentence at a court-martial would not include a dishonorable discharge or confinement in excess of 1 year.

Table 7: All Army Allegations and Service-identified Incidents of Recruiter Irregularities by Disciplinary Action for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005

	Total	Not qualified for enlistment	Coercion	Concealed medical information	Concealed police record	Concealed prior service
2004						
Other than honorable discharge	6	0	0	0	0	0
General discharge	7	0	0	0	0	0
Civilian relief	0	0	0	0	0	0
Courts martial	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relief for cause non-commissioned officer	23	3	1	2	5	0
Article 15	13	0	0	2	4	0
Letter of admonishment	4	1	0	1	1	0
Letter of reprimand	83	3	5	15	14	1
Civilian reprimand	0	0	0	0	0	0
Counseled/letter of concern	53	14	3	6	11	0
Verbal reprimand/ counseling	108	34	4	7	16	0
Action pending	9	1	0	1	3	0
No action taken	731	50	19	335	109	3
Open case	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**1037**	**106**	**32**	**369**	**163**	**4**
2005						
Other than honorable discharge	0	0	0	0	0	0
General discharge	2	0	0	0	0	0
Civilian relief	2	0	0	2	0	0
Courts martial	4	0	0	1	0	0
Relief for cause non-commissioned officer	22	2	0	1	3	1
Article 15	21	0	0	0	0	0
Letter of admonishment	3	1	0	2	0	0
Letter of reprimand	87	8	3	16	10	0
Civilian reprimand	2	0	0	1	0	0
Counseled/letter of concern	30	2	0	5	3	0
Verbal reprimand/ counseling	108	15	2	21	14	5

Concealment of dependents	False promise	Falsification of documents	Illegal testing	Other	Parental consent	Misconduct
0	0	0	0	0	0	6
0	0	0	0	0	0	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	6	4	1	0	0
0	0	6	0	0	0	1
0	0	1	0	0	0	0
3	3	21	6	8	1	3
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	3	4	1	6	2	0
1	9	5	2	27	2	1
1	1	1	0	0	0	1
39	62	46	10	55	3	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	**78**	**90**	**23**	**97**	**8**	**19**
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	2
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	1	1	0	0	0	1
1	0	6	7	1	0	0
0	0	7	1	0	0	13
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	21	5	2	1	18
0	0	1	0	0	0	0
5	3	3	2	5	1	1
5	14	6	1	25	0	0

(Continued From Previous Page)

	Total	Not qualified for enlistment	Coercion	Concealed medical information	Concealed police record	Concealed prior service
Action pending	8	1	0	2	2	0
No action taken	603	55	18	248	82	4
Open case	21	1	0	3	4	0
Total	**913**	**85**	**23**	**302**	**118**	**10**

Concealment of dependents	False promise	Falsification of documents	Illegal testing	Other	Parental consent	Misconduct
0	1	1	1	0	0	0
28	54	58	27	24	2	3
0	0	6	3	4	0	0
41	**74**	**110**	**47**	**61**	**4**	**38**

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by the Army.

Note: Most of the cases in the disciplinary category identified as “No action taken” were for allegations that were unsubstantiated and service-identified incidents deemed as recruiter error in which the Army determined no wrongdoing occurred.

Services Use Information on Recruiter Irregularities to Update Their Training

All of the services have mechanisms for updating their recruiter training as a result of information on recruiter irregularities. These mechanisms include internal inspection programs and routine recruiter discipline reports. The services also react to reassure public confidence in the recruiting process when specific incidents or reports of recruiter irregularities become widely known. Each service recruiting command assesses and evaluates how recruiting policies and procedures are being followed, the results of which are focused on training at the Army Battalion, Navy and Marine Corps District, and Air Force Squadron command level. For example, the Navy Recruiting Command's National Inspection Team conducts unannounced inspections at the Navy recruiting districts and forwards the results of the inspection to the Navy Recruiting Command headquarters. The Navy Recruiting Command's National Training Team follows up by conducting refresher training at the recruiting station locations or in the subject areas where the National Training Team identified discrepancies. The Marine Corps' National Training Team also conducts periodic inspections and training based on the results of their inspections. Additionally, the Marine Corps National Training Team provides input and guidance to the Marine Corps recruiter school course curriculum. The Air Force Recruiting Command Judge Advocate distributes quarterly recruiter discipline reports to heighten awareness of wrongdoing and encourage proper recruiter behavior. In addition, these reports are used to show examples of wrongdoing during new recruiter training. The Army Recruiting Command conducted commandwide refresher training on May 20, 2005, in response to a series of press reports of recruiters using inappropriate tactics in their attempts to enlist new servicemembers. The Army stated that the training goal was to reinforce that recruiting operations must be conducted within the rules and regulations and in accordance with Army values.[18]

Conclusions

Military recruiters represent the first point of contact between potential servicemembers and those who influence them—their parents, coaches, teachers, and other family members. Consequently, a recruiter's actions can be far reaching. Although existing data suggest that the overwhelming number of recruiters are not committing irregularities and irregularities are not widespread, even one incident of recruiter wrongdoing can erode

[18]The Army values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

public confidence in DOD's recruiting process. Existing data show, in fact, that allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing increased between fiscal years 2004 and 2005. DOD, however, is not in a position to answer questions about these allegations and service-identified incidents because it does not know the true extent to which the services are tracking recruiter irregularities or addressing them. Moreover, DOD is unable to compile a comprehensive and consolidated report because the services do not use consistent terminology regarding recruiter irregularities. Individual service systems are not integrated, processes are decentralized, and many allegations are undocumented. Although DOD officials can point to external factors, such as a strong economy and current military operations in Iraq as recruiting challenges, data suggest that internal requirements to meet monthly recruiting goals may also contribute to recruiter irregularities. Having readily available, complete, and consistent data from the services would place DOD in a better position to know the nature and extent of recruiter irregularities and identify opportunities when corrective action is needed.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve DOD's visibility over recruiter irregularities, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following action:

- Direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to establish an oversight framework to assess recruiter irregularities and provide overall guidance to the services.

To assist in developing its oversight framework, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to take the following three actions:

- Establish criteria and common definitions across the services for maintaining data on allegations of recruiter irregularities.

- Establish a reporting requirement across the services to help ensure a full accounting of all allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities.

- Direct the services to develop internal systems and processes that better capture and integrate data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities.

To assist DOD in developing a complete accounting of recruiter irregularities, we further recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to take the following action:

- Direct the commander of DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command to track and report allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Such analysis would include irregularities by service and the time during the monthly recruiting cycle when the irregularities occur.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with three of our recommendations that address the need for an effective oversight management framework to improve DOD's visibility over recruiter irregularities. While DOD partially concurred with our recommendation to establish a reporting requirement across the services and did not concur with our recommendation for the Military Entrance Processing Command to provide OSD with data on recruiter irregularities, the department did not disagree with the substance of these recommendations. Rather, DOD indicated that it would implement these recommendations if it determined such requirements were necessary. DOD's comments are included in this report as appendix II.

DOD concurred with our recommendations to establish an oversight framework to assess recruiter irregularities and provide overall guidance to the services; to establish criteria and common definitions across the services for maintaining data on recruiter irregularities; and for the services to develop internal systems and processes that better capture and integrate data on recruiter irregularities.

DOD partially concurred with our recommendation to establish a reporting requirement across the services to help ensure a full accounting of recruiter irregularities, but agreed that some type of reporting requirement be established. The department believes that implementing this recommendation may be premature until it has established an over-arching management framework to provide oversight that uses like terms for recruiter irregularities, and that the requirement and frequency should be left to the judgment of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. DOD stated its intent to establish an initial reporting requirement to ensure the processes it develops are functioning

as planned and to use this time period to assess the severity of recruiter irregularities issues. DOD further stated that regardless of whether or not it establishes a fixed reporting requirement, the services will be required to maintain data on recruiter irregularities in a format that would facilitate timely and accurate reports upon request. We do not believe it would be premature to establish a reporting requirement at this time. As we stated in our report, data that the services reported to us show that the number of allegations, substantiated cases, and criminal violations all increased from fiscal year 2004 to fiscal year 2005. Without a reporting requirement, we believe it would be difficult for OUSD to identify trends in recruiter irregularities and determine if corrective action is needed. Accordingly, we continue to believe that a reporting requirement for the services would help the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to carry out its responsibilities to review DOD's recruitment program to ensure adherence to approved policies and standards.

The department did not concur with our recommendation for DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command to track and report allegations and incidents of recruiter irregularities to OUSD because it believed this reporting would duplicate service reporting, and added that we had stated that recruiter irregularities are not widespread. However, DOD acknowledged, as our report points out, that even one incident of recruiter wrongdoing can erode public confidence in the recruiting process and agreed to consider this recommendation at a later date if it determines that recruiter irregularities are a significant problem and further analyses are required. While we did conclude from the data services provided to us that recruiter wrongdoing did not appear to be widespread, we also stated our belief that service data likely underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities, and further concluded that DOD is not in a position to answer questions about these allegations and service-identified incidents because it does not know the full extent to which the services are tracking recruiter irregularities or addressing them. We believe, therefore, that the significance of recruiter irregularities is not fully understood, and that addressing this recommendation should not be delayed. As we reported, Military Entrance Processing Command officials told us that they forward all allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities that surface during the screening process at the military entrance processing stations to the services' recruiting commands. We found, however, that the services' recruiting command headquarters data do not show records of allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities received from the Military Entrance Processing Command. Data currently captured by the Military Entrance Processing Command

would be instructive, particularly because these data show an increase in irregularities as Army recruiters approach the end of their monthly recruiting cycle, and we believe that these data would further inform DOD about the effectiveness of the oversight management framework it has agreed to establish.

As arranged with your office, unless you publically announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of this report. At that time, we will send copies of this report to interested congressional members; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

Derek B. Stewart

Derek B. Stewart, Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Scope and Methodology

To conduct our work, we examined Department of Defense (DOD) and military services' policies, regulations, orders, and instructions that govern the recruitment of military servicemembers and the investigation and resolution of allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing. We also reviewed recruiting-related reports issued by GAO, DOD, and the services. We analyzed data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities from the active and reserve components of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force databases, reports, and individual paper files. Additionally, we interviewed individuals at several DOD and service offices and recruiters in each service, and visited a number of recruiting and recruiting-related commands.[1] In the course of our work, we contacted and visited the organizations and offices listed in table 8.[2]

Table 8: Organizations and Offices Contacted During Our Review

Name of organization or office	Location
Air Force Recruiting Service	Randolph Air Force Base, Tex.
Air Force Recruiting School	Lackland Air Force Base, Tex.
Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service	Robins Air Force Base, Ga.
Air Force Recruiting Office	San Antonio, Tex.
Air Force Recruiting Office	Universal City, Tex.
Army Recruiting Command	Fort Knox, Ky.
Army Recruiting and Retention School	Fort Jackson, S.C.
Army Recruiting Station	Elizabethtown, Ky.
Marine Corps Recruiting Command	Quantico, Va.
Marine Corps Recruit Depot	San Diego, Calif.
Marine Corps District Command	San Diego, Calif.

[1]Discussions with officials at the National Guard Bureau revealed that the National Guard Bureau does not maintain data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. Further, if the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard collect and maintain these data, they would do so at 54 state, District of Columbia, and territory Guard offices. As a result, our study is limited to a discussion of the data on allegations of recruiter irregularities from the active and reserve components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

[2]The organizations and offices listed as those contacted during our review are limited to those that provided information that had an impact on our findings.

(Continued From Previous Page)

Name of organization or office	Location
Marine Corps Recruiting Station	San Diego, Calif.
Marine Corps Recruiting Sub-Station	San Diego, Calif.
Marine Corps Recruit Liaison Office	San Diego, Calif.
Marine Corps Recruiting School	San Diego, Calif.
Military Entrance Processing Command	North Chicago, Ill.
Military Entrance Processing Command Inspector General	North Chicago, Ill.
Military Entrance Processing Stations	Des Plaines, Ill. San Diego, Calif.
Navy Recruiting Command	Millington, Tenn.
Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General	Millington, Tenn.
Navy Orientation and Recruiting Unit	Pensacola, Fla.
Naval Inspector General	Washington Navy Yard, D.C.
Navy Bureau of Personnel Inspector General	Millington, Tenn.
Naval Criminal Investigative Service	Washington Navy Yard, D.C.
Navy Judge Advocate General	Washington Navy Yard, D.C.
Navy Recruit Quality Assurance Team	Great Lakes, Ill.
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness	Washington, D.C.
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Manpower and Personnel	Washington, D.C.

Source: GAO.

To assess the extent to which DOD and the services have visibility over recruiter irregularities, we examined DOD and service policies, procedures, regulations, and instructions related to recruiting. In addition, we interviewed officials in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the services' recruiting officials and Inspectors General to obtain an understanding of various aspects of the data DOD and the services collect on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiting irregularities. We obtained data on recruiter irregularities from service recruiting commands' Inspectors General or other designated recruiting command offices, the Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service Basic Training Inspector General Liaison, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the recruiting commands' Staff Judge Advocates. Specifically, within each service, we analyzed fiscal years 2004 and 2005 data.

- For the Army, we obtained data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities from its Recruiting Improprieties All Years database. We also obtained data on recruiting irregularities that

were processed as criminal violations from the Army Recruiting Command Judge Advocate's paper files.

- For the Navy, we obtained data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities from the Naval Inspector General's Case Management Information System, the Navy Bureau of Personnel Inspector General, the Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General's paper files, and the Navy Recruiting Quality Assurance Team. We also obtained data on Navy recruiter criminal violations from the Navy's Criminal Investigative Service.

- For the Marine Corps, we obtained data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities from its Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System. We also obtained data on recruiter criminal violations from the Navy's Criminal Investigative Service data system.

- For the Air Force, we obtained data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities from its Automated Case Tracking System and Trainee Tracking System, and data on criminal violations from its Automated Military Justice Administrative Management System. We also obtained data from the Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service's Headquarters Queries database.

To identify the factors within the current recruiting environment that may contribute to recruiting irregularities, we reviewed prior GAO work, Congressional Research Service reports addressing the recruiting environment, and the 2005 DOD Recruiter Quality of Life Survey Topline Report. We reviewed the sampling and estimation documentation for this survey and determined that it conforms to commonly accepted statistical methods for probability samples; the response rate for the DOD internal survey was 46 percent. Because DOD did not conduct a nonresponse bias analysis, we cannot determine whether estimates from this survey may be affected by nonresponse bias. Such bias might arise if nonrespondents' answers to survey items would have been systematically different from those of respondents. We reviewed service policies and processes governing recruiter selection, training, and performance evaluation, and interviewed key service officials about the types of challenges that exist in the recruiting environment and the methods used to evaluate recruiter performance. Additionally, we gathered and analyzed statistical information from the Department of Labor and reviewed Military Entrance Processing Command data on the frequency and occurrence of applicant

disqualifications by service and reports on recruiter irregularities. Finally, we interviewed officials at the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command and two military entrance processing stations regarding recruiter irregularities.

To identify what procedures DOD and the services have in place to address individuals involved in recruiting irregularities, we examined service case data and spoke with service recruiting command officials to determine how services imposed disciplinary action and what, if any, other actions they took to mitigate wrongdoing in the recruiting process. For each service, we obtained data on disciplinary actions imposed for cases of recruiter irregularities but specifically examined and analyzed Army data as they appeared to be the most comprehensive. We present these data for fiscal years 2004 and 2005. We also reviewed service regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice to understand departmentwide standards and the authorities that are granted to commanders to administer military justice. Finally, we reviewed service training materials and spoke with service recruiting command officials to identify other ways services use information on recruiter wrongdoing to try to mitigate errors and irregularities in the recruiting process.

To assess the reliability of the services' data on allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities, we interviewed officials about the processes used to capture data on recruiter irregularities, the controls over those processes, and the data systems used; and we reviewed documentation related to those systems. Based on responses to our questions, follow-up discussions, and the documentation we reviewed, we found limitations in many service data systems, including reliance on paper files; databases that cannot be fully queried, if at all; and in some cases, lack of edit checks and data quality reviews. Although we identified weaknesses in the available data, we determined, for the purposes of this report, that the data were reliable for providing limited information on recruiter irregularities.

Comments from the Department of Defense

PERSONNEL AND READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JUL 24 2006

Mr. Derek B. Stewart
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Stewart:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, "MILITARY RECRUITING: DoD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility Over Recruiter Irregularities," dated July 6, 2006 (GAO Code 350752/GAO-06-846).

The Department concurs with some, but not all of the Report's recommendations. We concur with the first GAO recommendation that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should establish an oversight framework to assess recruiter irregularities and to provide overall guidance to the Services. Establishing criteria and common definitions across the Services and the development of internal systems and processes to better capture data concerning recruiter irregularities will be essential in establishing this framework. While each of the Services currently has a system and process for accomplishing this task, it is clear that there is room for improvement.

However, the Department does not concur with the recommendations that a reporting requirement be established nor do we agree with adding a Military Entrance Processing Command tracking requirement to the process. We believe these are premature. If, through the newly implemented oversight framework, it is determined that there is a significant problem with recruiter irregularities, we would proceed to implement these recommendations. But, in this report GAO itself stated that existing data suggest that recruiter irregularities are not widespread.

We certainly agree with the GAO statement that even one incident of recruiter wrongdoing can erode public confidence in DoD's recruiting process. We also take this issue very seriously and believe that the oversight framework as recommended by GAO will adequately address the issue. The Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness will work in concert with the Services to

implement the appropriate recommendations in a timely manner. We believe these actions can be completed by June 2007.

The enclosure contains detailed departmental comments on each of the five recommendations identified by the GAO. The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Dominguez
Principal Deputy

Enclosure:
As stated

GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED JULY 6, 2006
GAO CODE 350752/GAO-06-846

"MILITARY RECRUITING: DoD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility Over Recruiter Irregularities"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Now on p. 35.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to establish an oversight framework to assess recruiter irregularities and provide overall guidance to the Services. (p. 36/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

While the Department has relied on the Services to provide timely and accurate data on recruiter irregularities, it is appropriate for the DoD to establish a standardized framework allowing for a fair and accurate assessment of recruiter irregularities across the Services. Done correctly, this will provide the Department with sufficient information to identify both positive and negative trends that may warrant attention. The current absence of an over-arching framework does not negate the level of importance the Department places on this issue. Each incident of recruiter irregularity negatively impacts the Services and the enlistment process.

Now on p. 35.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to establish criteria and common definitions across the Services for maintaining data on allegations of recruiter irregularities. (p. 36/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

An integral part of a standardized framework will require the establishment of similar terms across the Services. Currently, the Services use various methods and terms to identify and report recruiter infractions. A redefining of those terms may prove challenging and will necessitate a change in the Services' internal procedures and follow-up actions. This change will include both formal and informal practices established by the Services over time. It is vital that this be done in concert with the Services so valid comparisons can be made and guidance be provided as required.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to establish a reporting

Now on p. 35.

requirement across the Services to help ensure a full accounting of all allegations and Service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. (p. 36/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Partially Concur.

The Department agrees that some type of reporting requirement be established; however, we believe it may be premature to establish this requirement at this time. It is our belief that once we have established an over-arching framework, where like terms are used, the report frequency/requirement be left to the judgment of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. An initial report requirement will be established to ensure the process developed is functioning as planned. During this period the Department will assess the severity of the recruiter irregularities issue and will implement reporting requirements based on those findings. Regardless of whether or not a fixed reporting requirement is established, the Services will be required to maintain the data in a format that would facilitate timely and accurate reports upon request.

Now on p. 35.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to direct the Services to develop internal systems and processes that better capture and integrate data on allegations and Service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities. (p. 36/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

This recommendation, when coupled with "Recommendation #2", will lay the framework for a program that provides oversight of recruiter irregularities. Both of these recommendations will be integral parts of a process which ultimately provides DoD with more useful data for assessing the issue. Like the standardization of terms, this will require DoD to work closely with the Services to establish a system that will provide any information on the subject at a moment's notice.

Now on p. 36.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to direct the commander of DoD's Military Entrance Processing Command to track and report allegations and Service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Such analysis would include irregularities by Service and the time during the monthly recruiting cycle when the irregularities occur. (p. 36/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Non-Concur.

The Department believes this reporting requirement would be duplicative of Service reporting. Once recommendations 2 and 4 are fully implemented, they should include these violations regardless of final disposition. If, at a later date it is determined that recruiter irregularities are a significant problem and further analyses are required, then the Department may consider this recommendation.

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Derek B. Stewart, (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov

Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, David E. Moser, Assistant Director, Grace A. Coleman, Tanya Cruz, Nicole Gore, Gregg J. Justice III, Mitchell B. Karpman, Warren Lowman, Julia C. Matta, Charles W. Purdue, and Shana Wallace made key contributions to this report.

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