

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**

**PRESENTATION TO THE MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF RECRUITING AND RETENTION**

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## **Introduction**

Mr. Chairman, Congressman McHugh, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss our efforts to ensure we recruit and retain high quality Airmen for the world's most respected air and space force. Our Airmen have been continuously deployed and globally engaged in combat missions for sixteen straight years—since the first F-15 touched down in Saudi Arabia in August 1990. Today, Airmen are fully engaged in the interdependent joint fight and stand prepared for rapid response and conflict across the globe as our nation's sword and shield.

Our priorities are clear: winning the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and preparing for the next war; developing and caring for our Airmen to maintain our competitive advantage; and modernizing and recapitalizing our aircraft and equipment to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. Due to increased operations, maintenance, and personnel costs, we have been forced to self-finance the centerpiece of future dominance—a massive and critical recapitalization and modernization effort for our aging air and space force. Budgetary pressures forced difficult choices to ensure that the Air Force would maintain the right balance across our personnel, infrastructure, readiness and investment portfolios.

The Air Force undertook significant personnel reductions to generate billions of dollars to reprogram towards essential air, space, and cyber systems recapitalization and modernization, congruent with three key mission priorities. The impact on our warfighting Airmen has been significant. We have been compelled to make some very difficult choices with respect to our people. Fewer platforms that require fewer operators and maintainers are part of the equation. We are taking a hard look at all our processes and streamlining our organizations. At the same

time, we want to improve the training of our Airmen. The bottom line is that we are becoming a leaner, more flexible, more capable force.

## **Recruiting**

As we prepare for an uncertain future, we are transforming the force to ensure we have the right sized and shaped force to meet emerging global threats with joint and battle trained Airmen. We are becoming a smaller force, with a critical need for specific skills. We recruit and organize our talent pool aimed at using these talents toward advancements in training and education for the complex, multinational, and interagency operations of the future.

Our recruiting force has met our recruiting mission through persistence and dedication. 2001 through 2006 had a recruiting mission of 158,533 and accessed 160,603 for 101% of mission accomplishment. For 2007, the active duty mission requirement is 27,800 and 6,486 new Airman have accessed up to this point with 12,122 waiting to enter Basic Military Training. We're on track to meet our goals. To date for FY07, we've accessed 100% of our active duty goal, and accessed 101% and 107% of our Reserve and Guard accession goals, respectively.

Recruiting Service continues to find the right person, for the right job, at the right time and this is ever evident in our most critical warfighter skills. Recruiting Service has filled every requirement for Combat Controller (CCT), Pararescue (PJ), Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE), and Linguist since 2001. This has been accomplished through hard work and the significant assistance of the Congress. These individuals are offered an Initial Enlistment Bonus (IEB) ranging from \$3K to \$12K, depending on the job and length of enlistment. No other enlistment bonuses are offered.

The majority of our officer programs have met with mission success except for the medical side of recruiting. Since 9/11, Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) and Air Force

Medical Service (AFMS) have worked together to implement innovative ways to address our shortfalls in medical recruiting. Overall recruiting of fully qualified (FQ) healthcare professionals is 56.5%. By category, recruiting rates for physicians and dentists are 9.4% and 24.1% respectively; nurse recruiting was 90.2%. Biomedical sciences and medical administrators recruiting rates were both 100%.

## **Retention**

Low retention is a major contributor to AFMS chronic specialty shortages. Retention of health professionals after initial commitment is a difficult challenge. The retention at the 10-year point is ~ 26% for physicians and dentists, ~35% for nurses, ~47% biomedical sciences officers and ~60% for administrators. AFMS continues to develop accession and retention incentives to ensure the right mix of health professionals.

In FY07, we continued to manage and shape the force across and within skills. Maintaining retention at acceptable levels through targeted retention programs continues to be critical to this effort. Force shaping ensured active duty end strength met our longer term requirements.

Active duty Air Force and ANG met their overall officer and enlisted retention goals for FY06. The AF Reserve met its officer retention goal but fell short of its enlisted retention goal by 0.8%, attaining 99.2% of its goal. Even with these successes, some enlisted specialties in the active Air Force did not achieve their overall retention goal, including Air Traffic Control, Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE), A-10, F-15 & U-2 Avionic Systems, Aerospace Maintenance, Special Vehicle Maintenance Fire Trucks, and Contracting.

Our most critical warfighting skills require a special retention focus to maintain combat capability due to critical manning and increased operations tempo demands placed on career

fields including Pararescue, Combat Control, and Explosive Ordnance Disposal. Budgetary support for retention programs is critical to effectively manage the force and retain needed warfighting capability. These programs are judiciously and effectively targeted to provide the most return-on-investment in both dollars and capability.

Our warfighting Airmen are committed to serving, including those experiencing high deployment rates. Combatant Commander (COCOM) requirements and the GWOT require a high demand for pilots, intelligence, maintenance, civil engineers, and communication and information officers as well as enlisted Airmen in aerospace maintenance, supply, transportation, munitions and weapons, fire protection, services, and security forces. Despite an increased operations tempo and deployment rate, retention statistics for these career fields mirror the Air Force average.

### **Force Development**

As part of our Air Force Transformation, we continue to improve education and training. We are extending Basic Military Training to 8.5 weeks, to teach Airmen skills to defend an Air Base and set them up in an expeditionary operation. We are teaching Airmen self aid and buddy care so they can take care of each other when their bases take mortar fire or the truck they are driving hits an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). We are teaching language training and enhancing regional studies in our Air Command and Staff College, Air War College, and NCO Academy. We are consolidating Air Force Specialty codes to provide broader skill sets and enabling flexibility in GWOT and support of COCOM missions.

We have also placed a great focus on language and culture training at our officer accession sources. One force development strategy is to target foreign language speakers, primarily focusing on AFROTC detachments sponsoring foreign language programs. Currently,

we have 54 cadets enrolled as Language Majors, with another 629 scholarship cadets majoring in technical degrees and taking languages for their elective. Beginning with cadets contracted in August of 2006, cadets with AFROTC scholarship contracts majoring in non-technical degrees must complete 12 semester hours of foreign languages.

### **Conclusion**

Today's Airmen are doing amazing things to execute the Air Force mission, meet Air Force commitments, and keep the Air Force on a vector for success against potential future threats in an uncertain world. We are ready and engaged today, but we must continue to invest to ensure tomorrow's air, space, and cyberspace dominance. Our aim is to improve capability, maintaining the greatest combat-ready force in the world. America can afford nothing less.