



Report to the Subcommittee on Military
Personnel, Committee on Armed
Services, House of Representatives

January 2010

MILITARY RECRUITING

Clarified Reporting Requirements and Increased Transparency Could Strengthen Oversight over Recruiter Irregularities



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Highlights of [GAO-10-254](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

To sustain a viable military force, the Department of Defense (DOD) depends on recruiting several hundred thousand qualified individuals into the military each year. The service components rely on their recruiters to act with the utmost integrity because even a single incident of wrongdoing on the part of a recruiter—a recruiter irregularity—can adversely affect the service components' ability to recruit qualified individuals. GAO was asked to (1) analyze data on reported cases of recruiter irregularities across the service components, (2) review the extent to which the service components have guidance and procedures to address recruiter irregularities, and (3) review the extent to which the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has oversight over recruiter irregularities. GAO analyzed the data on recruiter irregularities reported to OSD by the service components; reviewed the service components' recruiter irregularity case files; examined relevant guidance and procedures from the service components; and interviewed service components' recruiting command personnel, recruiters, and OSD officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making several recommendations to improve the service components' sharing of recruiter irregularity data, the clarity of OSD's reporting guidance, and the transparency of the data reported to OSD. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-10-254](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

MILITARY RECRUITING

Clarified Reporting Requirements and Increased Transparency Could Strengthen Oversight over Recruiter Irregularities

What GAO Found

From fiscal year 2006 through 2008, the total number of substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities across the service components represented a small percentage of overall accessions (i.e., number of individuals entering military service), and the service components have taken various actions against the recruiters responsible for these irregularities. Specifically, the number of substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities as a percentage of overall accessions was 0.26 percent in fiscal year 2006, 0.22 percent in fiscal year 2007, and 0.18 percent in fiscal year 2008. The most common types of recruiter irregularity reported involved concealment or falsification of documents or information, sexual misconduct, and quality control measures (e.g., valid parental signatures). The action most commonly applied against recruiters who committed irregularities varied by service component. Removal from recruiting was the most commonly applied action in the Marine Corps while adverse administrative action (e.g., a letter of reprimand in the recruiter's personnel file) was most commonly applied in the Army.

All service components have guidance and procedures on addressing recruiter irregularities and have improved oversight over them, but the manner in which data on recruiter irregularities are shared within the service components varied. Although some differences exist, the service components are similar in how they identify, investigate, and adjudicate recruiter irregularities. In addition, the service components have taken steps to identify and prevent recruiter irregularities, including establishing quality control checks to help identify recruiter irregularities and providing training for recruiters to help prevent recruiter irregularities. However, in most service components, not all levels of command have regular access to information on recruiter irregularities that occur. Without regular access to information, commanders may not be able to take full advantage of servicewide recruiter irregularity data and opportunities to learn from their peers.

Although OSD has implemented requirements for the service components to regularly report on recruiter irregularities, it does not have complete oversight over the recruiter irregularities that occur. In December 2006, OSD issued a memorandum for the service components on tracking and reporting recruiter irregularities, and the service components have been providing recruiter irregularity data to OSD. However, because some of the reporting requirements lack clarity, the service components do not interpret the reporting requirements in the same way. Further, the data provided to OSD by the National Guard are incomplete and the relevant offices within the National Guard Bureau do not provide appropriate caveats regarding these data, such as including information on the States and Territories that did not submit recruiter irregularity data. Unless OSD clarifies the reporting requirements in its memorandum and directs the service components to provide transparency in the data they report, it will be unable to maintain complete oversight over the extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring and make determinations on whether corrective action is needed.

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Abbreviations

ASVAB	Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery
DOD	Department of Defense
MEPCOM	Military Entrance Processing Command
MEPS	Military Entrance Processing Station
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

January 28, 2010

The Honorable Susan A. Davis
Chairwoman
The Honorable Joe Wilson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

To sustain a viable all-volunteer military force, the Department of Defense (DOD) depends on recruiting several hundred thousand qualified individuals into the military each year. Although DOD's service components have generally met their recruiting goals in recent years,¹ the recruiting environment continues to present challenges, partly due to the length, frequency, and difficult nature of deployments expected of servicemembers. While the present economic downturn has increased the number of individuals expressing an interest in military service, DOD estimates that only 3 out of 10 American youth ages 17 to 24 are qualified to join the military. If economic conditions improve, it may become more difficult for the military to find qualified recruits to carry out its challenging mission.

The service components have assigned 30,000 recruiting personnel to carry out DOD's goal of recruiting high-quality individuals into the military. Recruiters serve as the military's representatives in communities throughout the United States, and the service components rely on them to act with the utmost integrity in order to win and maintain the public's trust. DOD recognizes that even a single incident of wrongdoing on the part of a recruiter can erode public confidence in the recruiting process and damage a service component's reputation. To prevent such incidents from occurring, the service components' recruiting commands have developed guidance that governs recruiter irregularities, and instituted procedures for (1) reporting allegations of recruiter irregularities and (2) conducting an investigation to determine whether a case is substantiated or unsubstantiated. Substantiated cases of recruiter wrongdoing are those

¹"Service components" refers to the Army, the Army Reserve, the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Navy, the Navy Reserve, the Air Force, and the Air Force Reserve.

cases in which the service components determine that a recruiter violated recruiting guidance based on a review of the facts in the case.

Oversight of the service components' recruiting programs is the responsibility of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. That office is responsible for policy development, planning, resource management, and program evaluation specific to the readiness of the force, including those affecting the recruiting force. In establishing oversight over recruiter irregularities, OSD issued a directive-type memorandum defining recruiter irregularities as those willful and unwillful acts of omission and improprieties that are perpetrated or alleged to be perpetrated by a recruiter to facilitate the recruiting process for an applicant.² Recruiter irregularities encompass a range of actions including, for example, administrative paperwork errors, instructing applicants not to reveal certain disqualifying conditions, and criminal misconduct.³

In 2006, we reported that substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities were low relative to overall accessions (i.e., the number of individuals entering military service)—less than 1 percent.⁴ However, we found at that time that the service components and OSD were not able to determine the full extent to which recruiter irregularities were occurring within their command structures, thus preventing them from fully addressing the problem. For example, we determined that none of the service components could provide a comprehensive and accurate report on recruiter irregularities within its own organization because the service components used multiple data systems that were not integrated and maintained the data in different formats; lacked standardized procedures for recording the data; and did not account for all allegations of recruiter irregularities. As a result, we recommended that OSD establish an oversight framework to assess recruiter irregularities to include developing criteria and common definitions across the services for

²Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, *Tracking and Reporting of Recruiter Irregularities* (Dec. 21, 2006).

³OSD groups recruiter irregularities into the following eight categories: criminal misconduct; sexual misconduct; sexual harassment; fraternization or unauthorized relationship with an applicant; concealment or falsification; testing irregularity; false promise or coercion; and quality control measures, which are irregularities resulting from administrative oversight.

⁴GAO, *Military Recruiting: DOD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility over Recruiter Irregularities*, [GAO-06-846](#) (Washington, D.C.: August 8, 2006).

maintaining recruiter irregularity data, implementing a reporting requirement across the services, directing the services to develop internal systems and processes that better capture and integrate data on recruiter irregularities, and directing the commander of DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) to track and report allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter irregularities to OSD. In providing comments on our report, OSD agreed to establish a standardized framework allowing for a fair and accurate assessment of recruiter irregularities across the services, including establishing the criteria and common definitions for maintaining data on recruiter irregularities, and for the services to develop internal processes that better capture and integrate these data. OSD partially concurred with the recommendation to establish a reporting requirement across the services, but disagreed with the recommendation for MEPCOM to track and report allegations and incidents of recruiter irregularities to OSD because it said such a requirement would duplicate the reporting performed by the service components.⁵ Following our report, OSD issued the memorandum in December 2006 setting the definitions of recruiter irregularities and the requirements for the service components to track and report on all cases of recruiter irregularities.

In this context, you asked us to examine the service components' policies and procedures for addressing recruiter irregularities and OSD's oversight framework for assessing recruiter irregularities. This report addresses the following questions:

1. What have the data shown on the incidence and types of reported cases of recruiter irregularities across the service components and what actions have the service components taken in substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities?
2. To what extent have the service components developed guidance and procedures to address recruiter irregularities, what progress have they made in increasing their oversight over recruiter irregularities, and to what extent is information on recruiter irregularities shared within the service components?

⁵An OSD official also told us that MEPCOM only receives information on a subset of recruiter irregularities that are identified while the applicants are being processed at one of its military entrance processing stations, and would not know about irregularities that may come to light through other sources. MEPCOM has no direct command and control authority over the service components' recruiters, but is required to refer any allegations of recruiter irregularities that it identifies to the recruiter's commanders within the appropriate service component.

3. To what extent does OSD have oversight over recruiter irregularities that occur across the service components?

In conducting this review, we focused our scope on recruiter irregularities that affect the active, reserve, and National Guard components of DOD's military services that occurred from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008. To provide information on the number and type of recruiter irregularities, we analyzed recruiter irregularity data that OSD received from the service components for that period. However, due to possible reporting errors in the 2006 data resulting from the new reporting requirement on recruiter irregularities issued by OSD in December 2006, we were unable to present trends in recruiter irregularities. Additionally, we did not include fiscal year 2009 data in our analysis of recruiter irregularities across the service components because the data covering the full fiscal year 2009 will not be reported to OSD by the service components in time to be included in our analysis. Although we found recruiter irregularity data for the active and reserve components to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report, we could not present the data on recruiter irregularities reported by the National Guard because States and Territories do not report their data consistently and the different systems used by States and Territories for maintaining and reporting these data lead to data reliability issues. As part of our first objective, we also requested and reviewed case files from each of the active and reserve components for all substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities that occurred in fiscal year 2008 to provide illustrative examples of the types of recruiter irregularities that occur and the actions taken by the service components against recruiters responsible for committing recruiter irregularities. However, because the National Guard Bureau does not maintain centralized data on cases of recruiter irregularities, we selected and obtained case files from all seven States (Alabama, California, Indiana, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) that reported more than four substantiated recruiter irregularities in fiscal year 2008. To assess the extent to which the service components' have guidance and procedures in place to address recruiter irregularities, we obtained and reviewed the service components' written guidance related to the enlistment process and recruiter conduct. To determine the extent to which OSD has oversight over recruiter irregularities, we interviewed officials from OSD and MEPCOM. We supplemented our work for all three objectives with site visits to the service components' recruiting commands to interview recruiting command officials, staff from military entrance processing stations (MEPS), and recruiters.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2009 through January 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. More information on our scope and methodology is available in appendix I.

Results in Brief

OSD data have shown that from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008, substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities across the service components represented a small percentage of overall accessions, and the service components have taken various actions against the recruiters responsible for these irregularities. The total number of substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities as a percentage of overall military accessions was 0.26 percent (616 cases out of 239,629 accessions) in fiscal year 2006, 0.22 percent (526 cases out of 242,602 accessions) in fiscal year 2007, and 0.18 percent (450 cases out of 248,797 accessions) in fiscal year 2008. The substantiated cases, however, represented less than one-quarter of all reported cases of recruiter irregularities. Of the 7,081 cases of recruiter irregularities reported by the service components during this time period, substantiated cases comprised 22.5 percent (or 1,592 cases). The types of recruiter irregularities most frequently reported from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008 varied by service component. For example, in fiscal year 2008, the most common type of recruiter irregularity reported by all service components except the Air Force Reserve involved the concealment or falsification of documents or information, such as when a recruiter omitted information concerning prior criminal violations in an applicant's application packet. The incidence of other types of recruiter irregularities reported for fiscal year 2008 varied by service component. For example, sexual misconduct constituted the second most commonly reported type of recruiter irregularity in the Marine Corps, while quality control measures, such as a recruiter failing to obtain parental signatures on an applicant's application form, constituted the second most commonly reported type of recruiter irregularity in the Army. The types of actions taken against recruiters who committed irregularities in fiscal year 2008 also varied by service component. For example, the type of action most commonly applied in the Marine Corps was removal from recruiting. In contrast, the type of action most commonly applied in the Army was adverse administrative action, such as placing a letter of reprimand in the recruiter's permanent personnel file. Within the National Guard, the types of actions taken against a recruiter who committed irregularities varied among the seven

States included in our review, likely due to the differences in state laws and guidance that govern how investigations are conducted and actions applied.

The service components have developed guidance and procedures to address recruiter irregularities and have improved their oversight over them, but the manner in which information is shared within the service components varies.⁶ All service components have guidance on recruiter irregularities and have instituted procedures for reporting allegations of recruiter irregularities, conducting investigations, and adjudicating cases of recruiter irregularities. In addition, the service components have taken steps to identify and prevent recruiter irregularities, including establishing quality control checks throughout the enlistment process and providing training for recruiters on issues related to recruiter irregularities. However, as we reported in prior work, in order to make improvements and promote knowledge sharing, leaders at all levels of an organization need to receive information on a continuous basis about problems that may be occurring across the organization.⁷ The Air Force has taken initiative to regularly share servicewide recruiter irregularity data, including information on the types of recruiter irregularities committed and the disposition of cases, with all levels of command within the Air Force Recruiting Service and all recruiting staff. Air Force officials explained that making this information available to all levels within the Air Force Recruiting Service provides commanders with examples of how others are addressing recruiter irregularities, promotes consistent application of such actions in substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities across the Air Force, and serves as a deterrent to future recruiter irregularities. However, while all service components regularly provide recruiter irregularity data to their recruiting command headquarters, in most service components outside of the Air Force, not all levels of command have regular access to information on the recruiter irregularities

⁶United States Army Recruiting Command Regulation 601-45, *Recruiting Improprieties Policies and Procedures* (July 13, 2009); Marine Corps Order 1130.65A, *Total Force Recruiting Quality Control* (Feb. 20, 1987); Navy Recruiting Command Instruction 1137.3, *Investigating and Reporting of Allegations and Complaints* (Apr. 3, 2009); Air Force Recruiting Service Instruction 36-2001, *Recruiting Procedures for the Air Force* (Apr. 1, 2005); Air Force Reserve Command Instruction 36-2001, *Air Force Reserve Recruiting Procedures* (June 1, 2009).

⁷GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, [GAO/GGD-96-118](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 1996); and GAO, *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, [GAO-05-927](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 9, 2005).

occurring. This is because the other service components do not have procedures for the data to regularly flow back to the commanders at levels below the recruiting headquarters to inform their efforts. Without continuous access to information on recruiter irregularities across their service component, commanders may not be able to take full advantage of servicewide recruiter irregularity data and opportunities to learn from their peers. We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Army and Navy to identify mechanisms for the regular sharing of recruiter irregularity data within their service components.

Although OSD requires the service components to report on cases of recruiter irregularities, OSD does not have complete oversight over the recruiter irregularities that have occurred across the service components because the reporting requirements lack clarity and the data are incomplete. In December 2006, OSD issued a memorandum that defines recruiter irregularities, establishes specific reporting categories to capture the types of recruiter irregularities that occur and the actions the service components take in response, and requires semiannual reporting of recruiter irregularities by the service components to OSD.⁸ Although issuing the memorandum was an important first step in providing effective oversight over recruiter irregularities consistent with good management practices outlined in federal control standards, OSD still lacks comprehensive information on recruiter irregularities across the service components because some of the reporting requirements in the memorandum lack clarity and the data provided by the National Guard are incomplete.⁹ For example, although most service components report only on cases involving applicants, at least one service component reported on all cases of infractions by recruiters, such as the use of a government vehicle for personal use or inappropriate relationship with other military personnel. In addition, recruiting officials with whom we spoke cited several problems with categorization, including reporting categories being too broad and lack of clarity on how to report cases in which more than one type of irregularity was committed or more than one action was taken against the recruiter. OSD officials said that the reporting requirements will be clarified when the 2006 memorandum is turned into an instruction for the service components to follow, but they have not developed the

⁸Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, *Tracking and Reporting of Recruiter Irregularities* (Dec. 21, 2006).

⁹GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

instruction yet. With respect to the National Guard data, the data provided to OSD by the National Guard are incomplete. For example, our review of the recruiter irregularity data that the Army National Guard States and Territories provided to the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division in January 2009 showed that 18 of the 54 States and Territories did not provide the data for fiscal year 2008. The National Guard Bureau, in turn, has not provided the appropriate caveats in its reports to OSD about the States and Territories that did not provide their recruiter irregularity data, and OSD officials have not asked for such caveats. Unless OSD clarifies the reporting requirements in the memorandum and directs the service components to provide transparency in the data they report, it will be unable to maintain complete oversight over the extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring across the service components and determine whether corrective action is needed. We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to (1) complete the instruction on tracking and reporting data on recruiter irregularities to clarify the requirements and categories for the types of recruiter irregularities to be reported and actions taken; (2) direct the National Guard Bureau to provide transparency in the data that it reports to OSD and disclose any limitations in these data; and (3) include the appropriate disclosures concerning data limitations in the recruiter irregularity reports that it produces on the basis of these data for the Congress and others.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that it concurred with our recommendations. DOD described the actions that it plans to take to work with the service components on addressing our recommendations and plans to complete these actions during fiscal year 2010.

Background

Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, it is the responsibility of the services to recruit and train their forces. The service components depend on military recruiters to meet their annual recruiting missions. In fiscal year 2009, the service components utilized 30,936 military recruiters. Of those, 26,381 were frontline recruiters assigned a monthly recruiting goal.¹⁰ The remaining recruiters held supervisory and staff positions throughout the services' recruiting commands. (See table 1 for the number of recruiters for fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2009.)

¹⁰Frontline recruiters are those recruiting personnel who directly interact with applicants in the recruiting process.

Table 1: Number of Recruiters in Fiscal Years 2006 through 2009, by Service Component

Fiscal year	Army		Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force			DOD
	Active and Reserve	National Guard	Active and Reserve	Active and Reserve	Active	Reserve	National Guard	
Total recruiters								
2006	11,410	6,313	5,133	3,388	2,284	412	464	29,404
2007	11,347	7,558	5,261	3,633	2,259	411	464	30,933
2008	12,232	7,893	5,499	4,033	1,992	424	464	32,537
2009	11,171	7,042	5,670	4,033	2,033	429	558	30,936
Frontline recruiters								
2006	10,381	4,919	4,796	3,388	1,624	339	464	25,911
2007	10,281	5,027	5,027	3,633	1,580	342	464	26,354
2008	11,190	4,970	5,321	4,033	1,320	347	464	27,645
2009	10,283	4,456	5,348	4,033	1,346	357	558	26,381

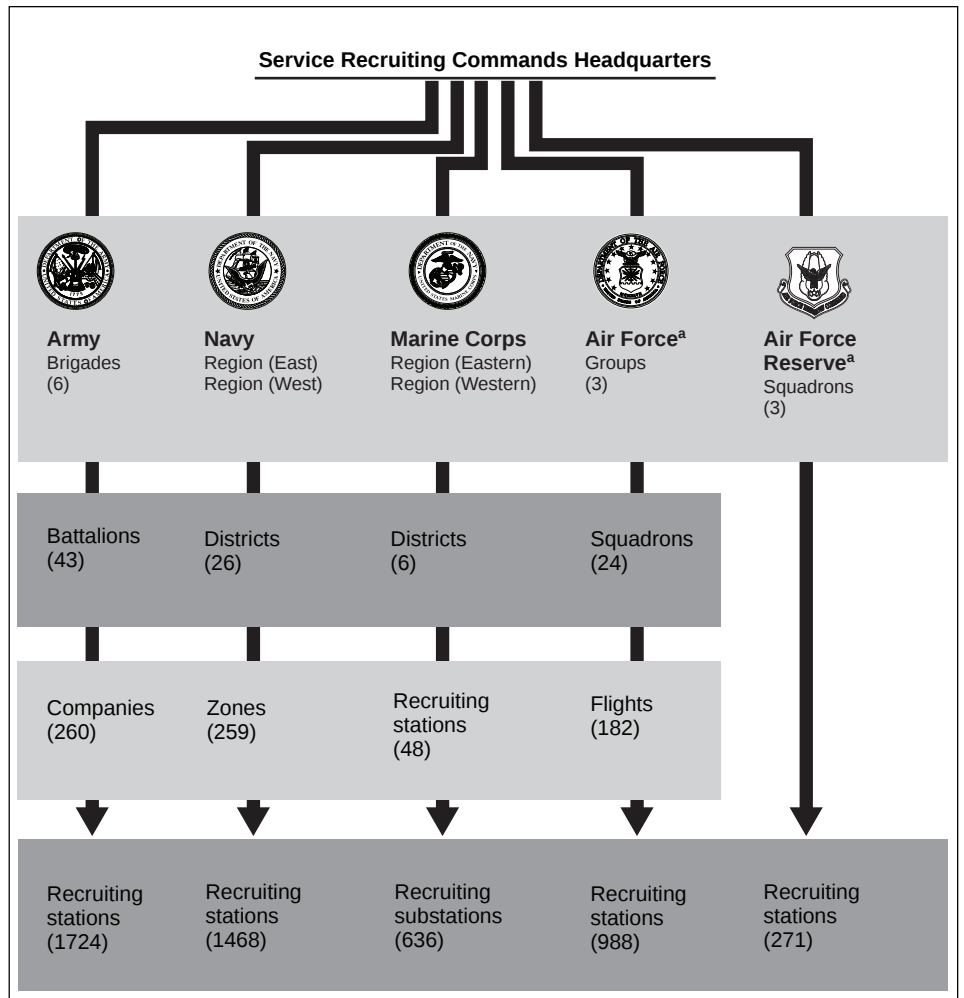
Source: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Note: Unlike the Air Force, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps recruiters recruit for both active and reserve components of their services.

Each of the military services has its own recruiting command, which is responsible for the service's recruiting mission and functions.¹¹ The role of the recruiting command is to provide support to the recruiting force and guidance for the recruitment and enlistment process. In addition, the recruiting command plays a role in developing the recruiting goals. The commands are structured similarly across the services with some variation in organizational structure, as noted in figure 1. The recruiting command is the recruiting headquarters for each service, with subordinate commands between the headquarters level and recruiting stations or substations where frontline recruiters work to reach out to prospective applicants and communicate to them the benefits of joining the military.

¹¹The Army Recruiting Command is located at Fort Knox, Kentucky; the Navy Recruiting Command is located in Millington, Tennessee; the Marine Corps Recruiting Command is located at Quantico, Virginia; the Air Force Recruiting Service is located at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas; and the Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service is located at Warner Robins, Georgia.

Figure 1: Organization of the Service Recruiting Commands



Source: GAO analysis of information from the service components.

^aThe Department of the Air Force is the only military department in which the recruiting commands for the active and reserve components are separate.

Note: The Army National Guard and the Air National Guard have recruiting entities that are separate from the recruiting commands for the Army and the Air Force. Recruiting in the Army National Guard is overseen by the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division within the National Guard Bureau. Recruiting in the Air National Guard is overseen by the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service within the National Guard Bureau.

Since 2006, most of the service components have been able to achieve their recruiting goals, and all service components met their recruiting goals in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. (See table 2 for accession goals and achievements from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2009.) Service

component officials and recruiters alike have attributed the high rate of recruiting success to the conditions of the economy and the services' competitive advantage over the civilian job market, particularly given the rising unemployment rate. DOD found that more youth are willing to consider military service during periods of high unemployment. Recruiters reported, however, that while they have seen an increase in the number of individuals interested in military service, many of them do not meet the military's qualification requirements. DOD estimated that approximately 7 out of 10 youth ages 17 to 24 do not meet the military's entrance standards for reasons including medical conditions, prior criminal records, and existence of young dependents.

Table 2: Enlisted Accessions for Each Service Component in Fiscal Years 2006 through 2009

Service component	Fiscal year 2006		Fiscal year 2007		Fiscal year 2008		Fiscal year 2009	
	Accessions achieved	Percentage of goal achieved	Accessions achieved	Percentage of goal achieved	Accessions achieved	Percentage of goal achieved	Accessions achieved	Percentage of goal achieved
Army	80,635	101	80,407	101	80,517	101	70,045	108
Army National Guard	69,042	99	66,652	95	65,192	103	56,071	100
Army Reserve	34,379	95	35,734	101	39,870	106	36,189	105
Navy	36,679	100	37,361	101	38,485	100	35,527	100
Navy Reserve	9,722	87	10,627	100	9,134	100	7,793	101
Marine Corps	32,337	100	35,603	100	37,991	100	31,413	100
Marine Corps Reserve	8,056	100	7,959	110	7,629	100	8,805	122
Air Force	30,889	100	27,801	100	27,848	100	31,983	100
Air Force Reserve	6,932	105	7,110	104	7,323	105	8,604	109
Air National Guard	9,138	97	9,975	93	10,749	126	10,075	106
DOD	317,809	99	319,229	99	324,738	102	296,505	103

Source: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Even in this favorable recruiting environment, irregularities can occur and checks have been built into the enlistment process that may help minimize recruiter irregularities. These checks begin with the initial prescreening of

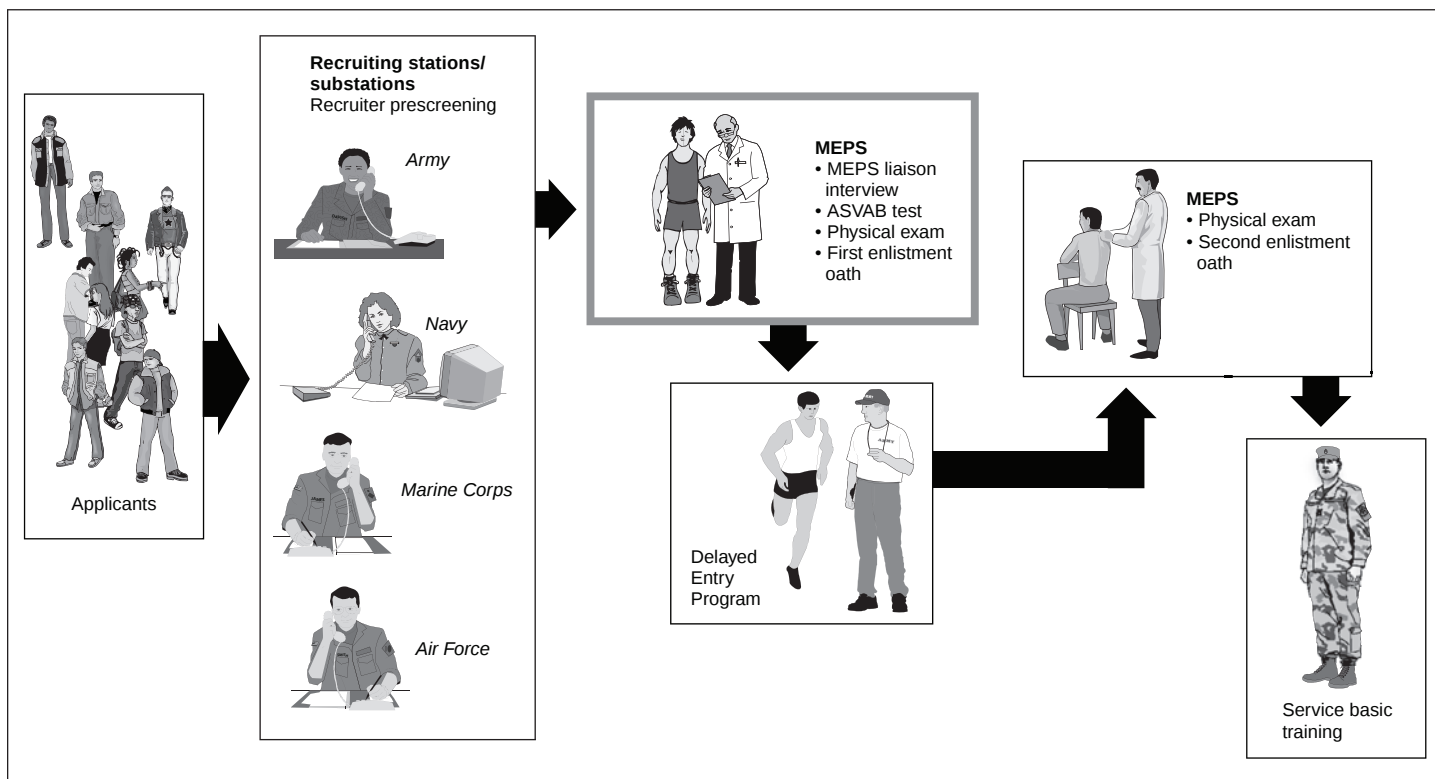
the applicant conducted by the recruiter and involve a background review, an initial determination of physical eligibility, and a review of education credentials. After the initial prescreening, the military pays the applicant to travel to 1 of the 65 military entrance processing stations (MEPS) located throughout the country.¹² Each MEPS station is staffed with military and civilian personnel, including liaisons representing each service component and MEPS staff who are responsible for quality control checks that are designed to prevent anyone not qualified for their service component from entering. Upon arrival at the MEPS, applicants meet with their service component's liaison who reviews their qualifications. Applicants are also administered the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) that determines the applicant's qualifications for enlistment and for a specific military job.¹³ In addition, a MEPS doctor conducts a medical examination to determine whether the applicant meets the physical entrance standards. When the applicant has met the qualifications for military enlistment, the applicant signs an enlistment contract and is sworn into the service before entering into the delayed entry program.¹⁴ In this program, applicants become members of the Individual Ready Reserve in an unpaid status until they receive orders to report for basic training. Prior to shipping to basic training, the applicant must return to the MEPS to undergo a brief physical examination that ascertains that the applicant continues to meet the physical fitness standards for entering the military. Upon successful completion of this final exam, the applicant is sworn into the military and shipped to basic training. Figure 2 illustrates the steps in the enlistment process.

¹²The MEPS are under the direction and control of MEPCOM, which is under the direct operational authority of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. MEPCOM's role is to ensure that all service applicants meet DOD standards for enlistment.

¹³The ASVAB test can also be administered to applicants at their high school or a Military Entrance Test site.

¹⁴The Army National Guard refers to its delayed entry program as the Recruit Sustainment Program.

Figure 2: Overview of the Enlistment Process



Source: GAO analysis of information from the service components; Art Explosion (clip art).

Substantiated Cases of Irregularities Represent a Small Percentage of Accessions, and Actions Have Been Taken against the Recruiters Responsible

Substantiated Cases of Recruiter Irregularities across the Service Components Comprise a Small Percentage of Overall Accessions

From fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008, the total number of substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities across the service components comprised a small percentage of overall accessions.¹⁵ As table 3 shows, the total number of substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities comprised less than 0.4 percent of accessions in every service component during this period. For example, there were 321 substantiated recruiter irregularity cases in the Army in fiscal year 2006, comprising 0.28 percent of the Army's accessions.

¹⁵The determination of whether a reported recruiter irregularity within the service components is substantiated or unsubstantiated is made by commanders within a recruiter's chain of command based on a review of the facts of an investigation.

Table 3: Total Number of Substantiated Recruiter Irregularities, Accessions, and Irregularities as a Percentage of Accessions, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2008

	Service component					Total
	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Air Force Reserve	
Fiscal year 2006						
Substantiated irregularities	321	159	102	14	20	616
Accessions	115,014	46,401	40,393	30,889	6,932	239,629
Substantiated irregularities as percentage of accessions	0.28	0.34	0.25	0.05	0.29	0.26
Fiscal year 2007						
Substantiated irregularities	278	93	119	25	11	526
Accessions	116,141	47,988	43,562	27,801	7,110	242,602
Substantiated irregularities as percentage of accessions	0.24	0.19	0.27	0.09	0.15	0.22
Fiscal year 2008						
Substantiated irregularities	253	101	71	17	8	450
Accessions	120,387	47,619	45,620	27,848	7,323	248,797
Substantiated irregularities as percentage of accessions	0.21	0.21	0.16	0.06	0.11	0.18

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Notes: Accessions numbers for the Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps include both active and reserve component accessions.

We did not present the number of cases of recruiter irregularities for the National Guard because not all States and Territories consistently report data and because of concerns about the reliability of the data reported.

We did not present fiscal year 2009 recruiter irregularity data because full fiscal year 2009 data will not be available in time to include in our analysis.

From fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008, less than 25 percent of the total reported cases of recruiter irregularities were found to be substantiated, as shown in table 4. However, the proportion of recruiter irregularities reported during that period that were found to be substantiated varied—both among the service components and within individual service components. For example, of the cases of recruiter irregularities reported in the Army during fiscal year 2008, 15 percent were found to be substantiated by commanders based on a review of the facts of an investigation; during the same period, 71 percent of the Air Force’s reported cases were substantiated.

Table 4: Cases of Substantiated Recruiter Irregularities as a Percentage of All Cases of Reported Recruiter Irregularities, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2008

Service component	Fiscal year 2006 (total)	Fiscal year 2007 (total)	Fiscal year 2008 (total)	Average, fiscal years 2006-2008 (total)
Army	18.8 (1,710)	15.9 (1,747)	15.1 (1,681)	16.6 (5,138)
Navy	33.8 (471)	36.3 (256)	27.4 (369)	32.2 (1,096)
Marine Corps	53.1 (192)	56.4 (211)	60.2 (118)	56.0 (521)
Air Force	9.0 (155)	62.5 (40)	70.8 (24)	25.6 (219)
Air Force Reserve	51.3 (39)	28.9 (38)	26.7 (30)	36.4 (107)
Total	24.0 (2,567)	22.9 (2,292)	20.3 (2,222)	22.5 (7,081)

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Note: We did not present the number of cases of recruiter irregularities for the National Guard because not all States and Territories consistently report data and because of concerns about the reliability of the data reported.

We did not present fiscal year 2009 recruiter irregularity data because full fiscal year 2009 data will not be available in time to include in our analysis.

Concealment or Falsification of Documents or Information Was the Most Commonly Reported Irregularity

From fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008, recruiter irregularities involving concealment or falsification, such as when a recruiter omitted information concerning prior criminal violations in an applicant's application packet, constituted the most commonly reported type of recruiter irregularity by all service components except the Air Force Reserve. For the Air Force Reserve, quality control measures, such as a recruiter failing to obtain parental signatures on an applicant's application form, were the most common type of recruiter irregularity reported. The second most commonly reported type of recruiter irregularity varied among the service components. For example, in fiscal year 2008, it involved quality control measures in the Army, while during the same fiscal year, it involved sexual misconduct in the Marine Corps. (See table 5 for the types of recruiter irregularities most commonly reported by the service components in fiscal year 2008.)

Table 5: Most Commonly Reported Types of Recruiter Irregularities as a Percentage of All Reported Recruiter Irregularities in Fiscal Year 2008, by Service Component

Service component	n=	Most common (percentage)	Second most common (percentage)
Army	1681	Concealment/falsification (50.7%)	Quality control measures (41.8%)
Navy	369	Concealment/falsification (64.8%)	Fraternization or unauthorized relationship with an applicant (10.6%)
Marine Corps	118	Concealment/falsification (44.9%)	Sexual misconduct (22.9%)
Air Force	24	Concealment/falsification (50.0%)	Fraternization or unauthorized relationship with an applicant (41.7%)
Air Force Reserve	30	Quality control measures (53.3%)	Concealment/falsification (33.3%)

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Note: We did not present the most commonly reported types of recruiter irregularities for the National Guard because not all States and Territories consistently report data and because of concerns about the reliability of the data reported.

Our review of the service components' case files of recruiter irregularities reported in fiscal year 2008 identified examples of recruiter irregularities illustrating each of the eight recruiter irregularity categories established in OSD's memorandum.¹⁶ As the examples in table 6 show, recruiters across the service components committed a range of recruiter irregularities, from administrative or paperwork errors to inappropriate relationships with applicants or recruits. (Additional examples can be found in appendix II.)

¹⁶OSD's memorandum groups recruiter irregularities into the following eight categories: criminal misconduct; sexual misconduct; sexual harassment; fraternization or unauthorized relationship with an applicant; concealment or falsification; testing irregularity; false promise or coercion; and quality control measures, which are irregularities resulting from administrative oversight.

Table 6: Examples of Substantiated Recruiter Irregularities by Type, Fiscal Year 2008

Criminal misconduct	A recruiter in charge of a recruiting station was involved in the purchasing of illegal drugs with a recruit (Navy).
Sexual misconduct	A recruiter impregnated a 17 year-old student in a high school in which he was responsible for recruiting (Marine Corps).
Sexual harassment	A recruiter sent sexually suggestive jokes to an applicant via e-mail, made inappropriate comments to the applicant, and refused to leave the applicant's place of employment (Air Force Reserve).
Fraternization or unauthorized relationship with an applicant	A recruiter requested inappropriate pictures from a recruit, exchanged inappropriate personal text messages with the recruit, and engaged in a sexual relationship with the recruit (Army).
Concealment or falsification	A recruiter omitted a driving under the influence violation from an applicant's application packet (Air Force).
False promise/coercion	A recruiter misled an applicant about the length of reserve service the applicant's contract would require (Army National Guard).
Testing irregularity	A recruiter attempted to have a recent recruit take the ASVAB for an applicant (Marine Corps).
Quality control measures	A recruiter did not obtain the signature of both parents on the parental consent form required for enlistment (Army).

Source: GAO analysis of recruiter irregularity case files provided by the service components.

Actions Taken against Recruiters in Substantiated Cases of Recruiter Irregularities Varied by Service Component

From fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2008, all service components took actions against recruiters who committed irregularities, but the service components varied in the types of actions that they most commonly took against these recruiters during these fiscal years. For example, as can be seen in table 7, in fiscal year 2008, the most common type of action taken by the Army involved adverse administrative action, such as placing a letter of reprimand in the recruiter's permanent personnel file, while the most common type of action taken in the Marine Corps involved removal from recruiting.

Table 7: Most Commonly Reported Actions Taken against Recruiters as a Percentage of All Actions Taken, Fiscal Year 2008

Service component	n=	Most common (percentage)	Second most common (percentage)
Army	253	Adverse administrative action (65.6%)	Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment (16.2%)
Navy	101	Non-adverse administrative action (42.6%)	Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment (35.6%)
Marine Corps	71	Removed from recruiting (49.3%)	Removed from service and adverse administrative action (16.9% each)
Air Force	17	Non-adverse administrative action (29.4%)	Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment (23.5%)
Air Force Reserve	8	Removed from recruiting, non-adverse administrative action, and administrative or processing error (25.0% each)	Adverse administrative action and Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment (12.5%)

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Note: We did not present the most commonly reported actions for the National Guard because not all States and Territories consistently report data and because of concerns about the reliability of the data reported.

The OSD memorandum provides the service components with specific categories to use when reporting on the status of cases, including categories for cases in which action has been taken, cases that are still ongoing, and cases that were determined to be unsubstantiated.¹⁷ Our review of the service components' case files of recruiter irregularities reported in fiscal year 2008 identified examples illustrating each of OSD's reporting categories. As can be seen in table 8, the service components sometimes take different actions against recruiters who committed similar types of recruiter irregularities. For instance, an Air Force recruiter was court-martialed for fraternizing with an applicant, while a Navy recruiter received an Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment for a similar type of offense. (Additional examples can be found in appendix III.)

¹⁷The categories established by OSD for the service components to use in reporting are: court-martial/civil conviction, removed from service, removed from recruiting, Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment, adverse administrative action, non-adverse administrative action, administrative or processing error, unsubstantiated, action pending, and an on-going investigation.

Table 8: Examples of Actions Taken against Recruiters Who Committed Recruiter Irregularities, Fiscal Year 2008

Court martial/civil conviction	For fraternizing with an applicant, a recruiter was court-martialed and was reduced in rank, confined for 30 days, and made to forfeit two-thirds of a month's pay for 2 months (Air Force).
Removed from service	For sexual misconduct, a recruiter was removed from service (Marine Corps).
Removed from recruiting	For fraternizing with an applicant, a recruiter was reduced in rank and transferred to a non-recruiting unit (Army National Guard).
Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment	For fraternizing with an applicant, a recruiter was reduced in rank, received restriction and extra duties, and was made to forfeit pay (Navy).
Adverse administrative action	For failing to ensure that an applicant's enlistment documents were completed correctly, a recruiter was given a letter of reprimand by his battalion commander (Army).
Non-adverse administrative action	For failing to perform adequate quality control checks on an applicant's application packet; thereby allowing the wrong ASVAB score to be filed in an applicant's application packet, a recruiter received counseling, which directed him to perform quality control checks on other application packets (Air Force Reserve).
Administrative or processing error	For failing to conduct a thorough prequalification interview of an applicant, a recruiter was judged to have committed a recruiter error. The recruiter was not punished, but his battalion commander used the error as an example in teaching his recruiters how to properly document information (Army).

Source: GAO analysis of recruiter irregularity case files provided by the service components.

For all service components, the determination of the action to apply in cases of recruiter irregularities is vested with the recruiting unit, and the commanders of the responsible recruiting units take a variety of factors into consideration when deciding on the actions to take against recruiters who commit irregularities. Several service component officials we interviewed reported that these commanders generally decide on the appropriate action to take against a recruiter on a case-by-case basis. For example, a Marine Corps Recruiting Command official told us that the commanders who are ultimately responsible for taking action against a recruiter can take into account how a particular action will affect a recruiter's family before deciding upon the appropriate level of action. This can lead to different actions taken in cases that fall into similar recruiter irregularity categories. While the Army National Guard States and Territories follow states' and territories' laws and guidance that

govern how actions are applied, our review of selected recruiter irregularity case files from the Army National Guard also showed that the actions taken against recruiters who committed irregularities varied among States. For example, we found that different actions were taken against the recruiters from different States who engaged in irregularities falling into the sexual misconduct category, ranging from non-adverse administrative action to removal from service. A recruiter in one State who admitted to a sexual relationship with an applicant received non-adverse administrative action, which included counseling, a 12-month suspended reduction in rank, and a 12-month suspension from favorable personnel actions, such as the ability to be promoted, be reassigned, or receive awards or bonuses. However, a recruiter in another State who provided alcohol to and engaged in a sexual relationship with an applicant was removed from service.

In the view of the recruiting command officials and recruiters with whom we spoke, the actions taken against recruiters who committed irregularities have generally been fair and sufficiently strict to act as deterrents against future recruiter irregularities. Further, they said that the ongoing training that recruiters receive includes examples of the actions taken against other recruiters who committed irregularities, thereby reinforcing the seriousness of committing a recruiter irregularity. For example, an Air Force recruiter told us that he realizes that he stands to receive strict punishment, such as a reduction in rank or removal from the Air Force, if he commits a recruiter irregularity.

The Service Components Have Developed Guidance and Procedures to Address Recruiter Irregularities, but Not All Service Components Share Recruiter Irregularity Data throughout All Levels of Command

The Service Components Have Developed Guidance to Address Recruiter Irregularities

All of the service components have developed guidance on recruiter irregularities and have instituted procedures for reporting allegations of recruiter irregularities, conducting an investigation, and adjudicating cases.¹⁸ Some service components have guidance specifically focused on recruiter irregularities. For example, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command developed a regulation that specifically focuses on recruiter irregularities—Regulation 601-45, *Recruiting Improprieties Policies and Procedures*—which covers the definitions of recruiter irregularities, the process of reporting irregularities up the chain of command, and the investigation and adjudication of recruiter irregularity cases.¹⁹ Other service components, such as the Marine Corps, address recruiter irregularities within their existing framework of recruiting guidance. For example, the Marine Corps uses Marine Corps Order 1130.65A, *Total Force*

¹⁸United States Army Recruiting Command Regulation 601-45, *Recruiting Improprieties Policies and Procedures* (July 13, 2009); Marine Corps Order 1130.65A, *Total Force Recruiting Quality Control* (Feb. 20, 1987); Navy Recruiting Command Instruction 1137.3, *Investigating and Reporting of Allegations and Complaints* (Apr. 3, 2009); Air Force Recruiting Service Instruction 36-2001, *Recruiting Procedures for the Air Force* (Apr. 1, 2005); Air Force Reserve Command Instruction 36-2001, *Air Force Reserve Recruiting Procedures* (June 1, 2009).

¹⁹United States Army Recruiting Command Regulation 601-45, *Recruiting Improprieties Policies and Procedures* (July 13, 2009).

Recruiting Quality Control, which covers recruiting in general, but includes provisions that apply to the reporting of recruiter irregularities and the actions that should be taken against recruiters who commit irregularities.²⁰

The Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service within the National Guard Bureau²¹ have also issued guidance providing the Army and Air National Guards of the 54 States and Territories with a broad framework for addressing recruiter irregularities.²² This guidance supplements laws and guidance that the Army National Guard and Air National Guard from each State and Territory follow. However, the implementation of National Guard Bureau guidance is at the discretion of the individual States and Territories. State National Guard recruiters typically operate under Title 32 of the U.S. Code through which they are federally funded but under state control. Therefore, State National Guard recruiters are subject to state laws and guidance unlike active duty recruiters operating under Title 10 of the U.S. Code who are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice and service component guidance in the event they commit a recruiter irregularity.²³ The Secretary of Defense issued a model code of military justice to recommend to the states for use with respect to the National Guard when not in federal service.²⁴ According to an official within the Office of the Chief Counsel within the National Guard Bureau, many states have partially adopted this model military code while others have not adopted it at all.

²⁰Marine Corps Order 1130.65A, *Total Force Recruiting Quality Control* (Feb. 20, 1987).

²¹According to 10 U.S.C. §10501, the National Guard Bureau is a joint activity of the Department of Defense, and is a channel of communication on all matters pertaining to the National Guard between the Departments of the Army and the Air Force and the states.

²²National Guard Regulation 601-1, *Personnel-Procurement: Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Program* (Apr. 28, 2006); Air National Guard Instruction 36-2602, *Air National Guard Recruiting Expenditures and Management of Recruiting and Retention Programs* (Mar. 28, 1997).

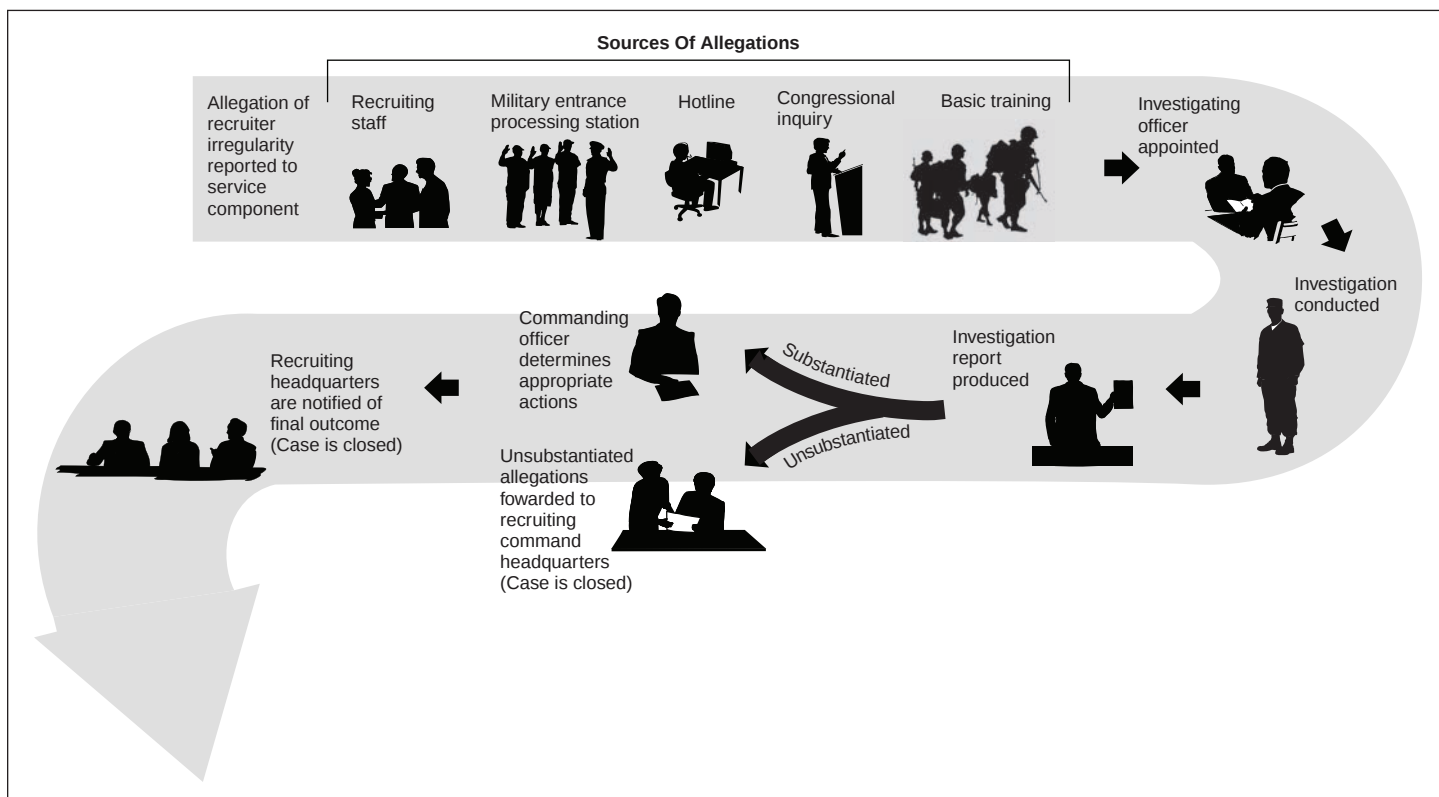
²³National Guard recruiters that recruit under Title 10—such as Reserve Component Career Counselors who recruit servicemen and servicewomen that are separating from active duty—are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice and service component guidance in the event they commit a recruiter irregularity.

²⁴The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, Pub. L. No. 107-314, §512 (2002), directed the Secretary of Defense to prepare a model state code of military justice and a model state manual for courts-martial to recommend to the states for use with respect to the National Guard when not in federal service.

The service components have similar procedures for identifying, investigating, and adjudicating recruiter irregularities. As figure 3 shows, recruiter irregularity allegations can be brought to light through a variety of sources, such as complaints submitted through congressional representatives, service component hotlines, and recruiting staff reporting on the suspicious behavior of a fellow recruiter. Once an allegation is brought to the attention of the service component, all service components follow several steps, including the appointment of the investigating officer, the investigation process, and the review of the report produced by the investigating officer. The investigation report and the recommendations therein are used by the appropriate unit commander to determine whether the allegation can be substantiated.²⁵ When it is determined that an allegation is substantiated, the commander also determines the appropriate action and provides the recruiter with the opportunity to present additional information and appeal the decision. The service components' recruiting command headquarters are notified of all final decisions in recruiter irregularity cases.

²⁵The determination of the appropriate unit commander can be based on a number of factors, to include where the recruiter irregularity investigation was initiated, the seriousness of the allegation, and the type of action that is recommended. The following service component recruiting command levels can be involved in the investigation review and adjudication process: Army—recruiting command, recruiting brigade, or recruiting battalion; Navy—recruiting region or recruiting district; Marine Corps—recruiting command, recruiting region, recruiting district, or recruiting station; Air Force—recruiting command, recruiting group, or recruiting squadron; and Air Force Reserve—recruiting command, recruiting squadron, or recruiting station.

Figure 3: The Service Components' Process for Addressing Recruiter Irregularities



Source: GAO analysis of information from the service components; Art Explosion (clip art).

Although the procedures for investigating and adjudicating cases of recruiter irregularities are generally similar across the service components, some differences exist. For example, the Army and the Air Force require that all recruiter irregularity investigations undergo a legal review—a review of the investigation report findings by the service component’s Judge Advocate’s office—while the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force Reserve do not have such a requirement.

Service component officials we interviewed generally agreed that the existing service component guidance on recruiter irregularities is sufficient and informs those involved on how to handle recruiter irregularities that come to light. Further, recruiters we interviewed generally agreed that service component guidance they receive on recruiter irregularities is sufficient and that they know how to report any cases of recruiter irregularities that they may come across.

The Service Components Have Taken Steps to Identify and Prevent Recruiter Irregularities

The service components have instituted a number of quality control checks to help identify recruiter irregularities, including the use of a hotline for individuals to report recruiter irregularities, periodic inspections of recruiting stations, and opportunities for recruits to reveal any potential recruiter irregularities committed by their recruiter during the enlistment process.²⁶ The service components use the following mechanisms to ensure that recruiters are abiding by recruiting standards and verify the accuracy of information in applicant packets:

- **Hotline.** Most service components make telephone numbers available to applicants and parents for reporting any suspected cases of recruiter irregularities by posting a notice in recruiting stations with a hotline listed or providing a card to applicants with the service component's hotline number listed. For example, Navy recruiters provide applicants with hotline cards that list recruiter and applicant rights, activities that recruiters are prohibited from doing, and a hotline number that applicants can call to report any alleged recruiter irregularities to the Navy Recruiting Command Inspector General's office.
- **Periodic inspections.** All of the service components conduct periodic inspections and command visits to recruiting stations. For example, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command's inspection program includes monthly visits and annual inspections by recruiting station commanders of the recruiting substations for which they are responsible. While these inspections do not focus specifically on identifying recruiter irregularities, recruiting command officials told us that some recruiter irregularities are identified in the course of the inspections process.
- **Opportunities to reveal irregularities.** All of the service components provide recruits with an opportunity to disclose any information about themselves that could disqualify them from enlistment, such as medical issues or criminal history, and also allow applicants to bring up any inappropriate behavior displayed by their recruiter, such as a recruiter telling an applicant to conceal a medical problem in order to facilitate the enlistment process. Officials we interviewed generally agreed that such opportunities for disclosure, commonly known as a "moment of truth," provide a powerful tool for identifying recruiter irregularities.

²⁶The service components' quality control checks are further complemented by the checks done at the MEPS to identify any discrepancies in the enlistment paperwork, such as signature verification and the use of biometrics (i.e., technologies that automate the identification of people by distinct physical or behavioral characteristics, such as fingerprint recognition).

All of the service components have programs in place to help prevent recruiter irregularities, including recruiter screening programs and recruiter training. In addition, the Army and Army National Guard have established policies requiring more than one person to be present when a recruiter interacts with an applicant of the opposite gender.²⁷

- **Screening programs.** All service components have recruiter screening programs to screen their recruiter candidates. For example, the Air Force Recruiting Service's screening program includes face-to-face interviews with recruiter candidates, reviews of the candidates' history of meeting physical standards, reviews of performance reports from the previous 3 years, and a credit check. Recruiting command officials acknowledged that recruiting is a stressful job and said that the rigorous screening of individuals interested in becoming recruiters helps ensure that only those individuals who are most qualified; are sufficiently motivated; have a high level of integrity; and are not burdened by additional external stressors, such as financial debt or ongoing divorce proceedings, are selected to receive training at the recruiter schools. Recruiting command officials also stated that these programs help screen out individuals who may be more susceptible to committing recruiter irregularities.
- **Recruiter training.** Once individuals are selected to become recruiters, they are required to attend the service component's or the National Guard's recruiter school, as appropriate, for initial recruiter training.²⁸ The service components' recruiting school officials and recruiters interviewed said that topics on ethical behavior, prohibited practices, fraternization, and sexual harassment are covered during the initial training. Additionally, they said that instructors share examples of actual recruiter irregularities with the new recruiters in order to inform them of situations to avoid. After graduating from the service component's recruiter school, recruiters receive ongoing training, covering topics such as sexual harassment and the reporting of suspected recruiter irregularities. For example, the Marine Corps

²⁷This policy is referred to as the "buddy" policy by the Army's active and reserve components and as the "no one alone" policy by the Army National Guard.

²⁸The Army Recruiting and Retention School is located at Fort Jackson, South Carolina; the Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit is located at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Pensacola, Florida; the Marine Corps Recruiters School is located at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California; the Air Force Recruiting School is located at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas; and the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Training Center is located at Camp Robinson, Arkansas. Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard recruiters attend the Air Force Recruiting School in Texas.

Recruiting Command developed a new course that all recruiters are required to take annually, covering ethical and unethical behavior and case studies of actual recruiter irregularity cases. Officials stated that the course, once implemented, will help recruiters identify situations that can lead to recruiter irregularities and ways they can avoid those situations. Service component officials and recruiters we interviewed generally agreed that existing training on recruiter irregularities is sufficient to help prevent future recruiter irregularities.

- **“Buddy” or “no one alone” policies.** The Army has implemented a policy requiring that whenever a recruiter comes in contact with a prospect, applicant, or future soldier of the opposite gender, at least one other qualifying person of any gender be present.²⁹ Also, according to the Chief of the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division, the Army National Guard in 26 states have implemented the same policy.

The Service Components’ Oversight and Data Sharing Have Improved, but Not All Service Components Share Data throughout All Levels of Command

Since we reported in our prior work that the service components’ recruiting commands did not have oversight over recruiter irregularities, the service components have improved oversight.³⁰ In our prior work, we reported that the service components had limited oversight over recruiter irregularities because multiple data systems for collecting and tracking recruiter irregularity data were being used. Because these systems were not integrated, the service components did not have oversight over all recruiter irregularities. Since then, the service components have made progress in establishing systems that have allowed for more consistent tracking and reporting of the recruiter irregularity data. We found that local recruiting units responsible for gathering and tracking recruiter irregularity data have systems and processes in place for passing the data up the chain of command to the service components’ recruiting command headquarters on a regular basis. Each service component’s recruiting command has an office at the headquarters level that is responsible for entering the data received from the local recruiting units into the service components’ database or spreadsheet and consolidating and reporting these data to OSD on a semiannual basis.

²⁹The Army includes, among others, the following individuals in its definition of a qualifying person: a family member (18 or older), recruiter, applicant (male or female, 18 or older), and future soldier (male or female).

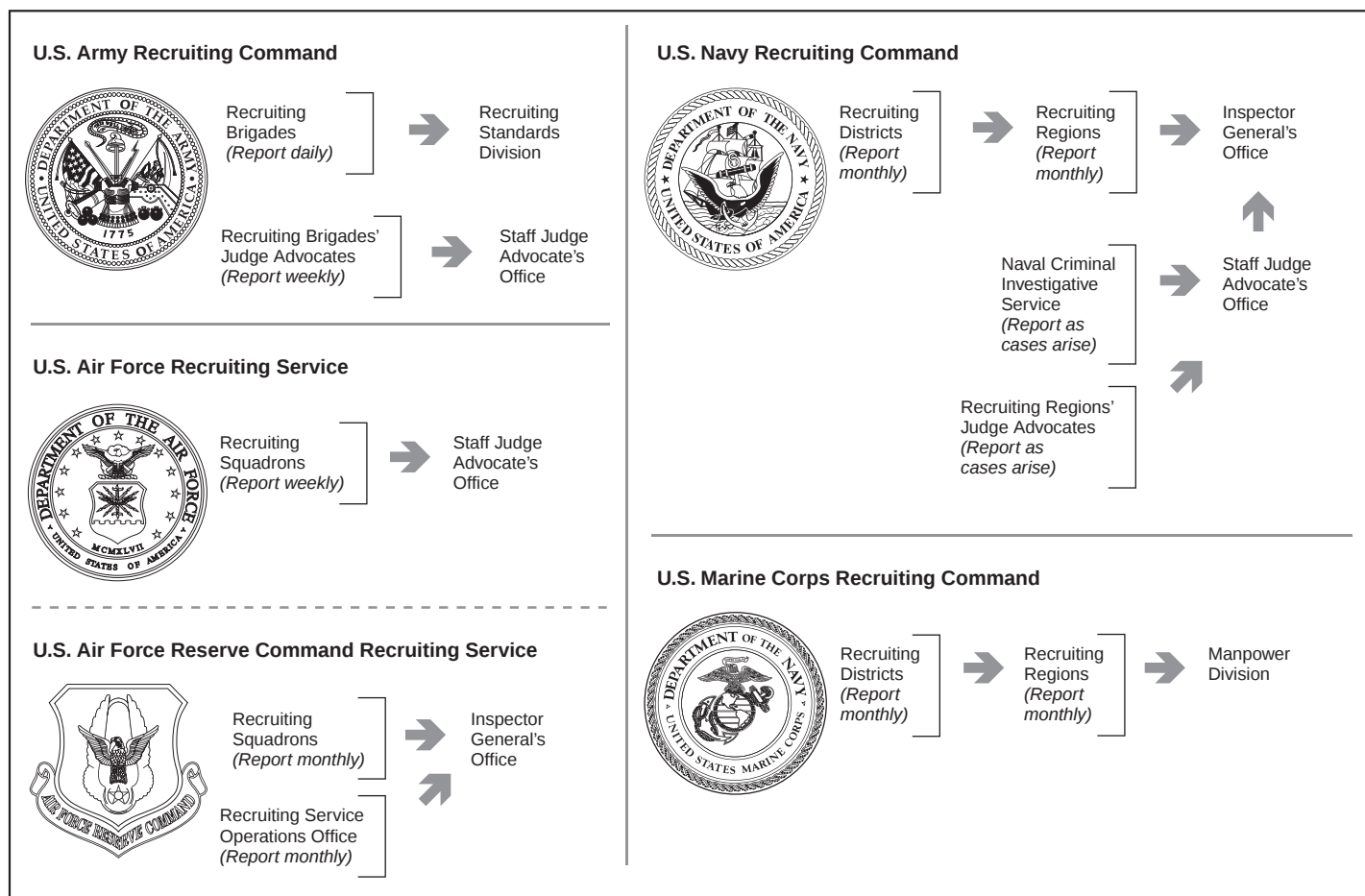
³⁰GAO, *Military Recruiting: DOD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility Over Recruiter Irregularities*, [GAO-06-846](#) (Washington, D.C.: August 8, 2006).

Although the reporting process is generally similar across the service components, some differences exist, as shown in figure 4. For example, most of the service components have only one recruiting command office in place that is responsible for gathering and tracking recruiter irregularity data; however, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command has two offices that are responsible for gathering and tracking recruiter irregularities—the Recruiting Standards Division and the Staff Judge Advocate’s office. The Recruiting Standards Division provides its consolidated recruiter irregularity data to the Staff Judge Advocate’s office, which then consolidates the data from both offices for the purpose of reporting to OSD. In addition, while the local recruiting units provide recruiter irregularity updates to the recruiting command on a daily basis in the Army and on a weekly basis in the Air Force, they do so on a monthly basis in the other service components.

Some of the service components are continuing to refine their systems for tracking and reporting recruiter irregularity data. For example, the Navy is in the process of procuring a new data system that will allow for functions such as trend analysis and advanced querying of recruiter irregularity data. In addition, the Air Force Reserve has recently updated its instruction to require recruiting personnel to report all actual or suspected recruiter irregularities to their senior recruiter and to inform the Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service Inspector General of all allegations.³¹

³¹Air Force Reserve Command Instruction 36-2001, *Air Force Reserve Recruiting Procedures* (June 1, 2009).

Figure 4: The Service Components' Processes for Reporting of the Recruiter Irregularity Data



Source: GAO analysis of information from the service components.

While all service components regularly provide recruiter irregularity data to the recruiting command headquarters, with the exception of the Air Force, they do not regularly make recruiter irregularity data available to all levels of command. This is because most of the service components do not have procedures in place to disseminate recruiter irregularity data to the commanders at levels below the recruiting headquarters. In contrast, the Air Force Recruiting Service shares recruiter irregularity data with leadership at all levels of command within the Air Force Recruiting Service and all recruiting staff through monthly and quarterly reports and newsletters. These reports contain information on the circumstances of the recruiter irregularity committed and the actions taken against the

recruiter.³² Air Force officials we interviewed explained that making this information available to personnel at all levels within the Air Force Recruiting Service provides commanders with examples of how others are addressing recruiter irregularities, promotes consistent application of actions in substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities across the Air Force, and serves as a deterrent to committing recruiter irregularities. Air Force recruiters we interviewed also generally agreed that the recruiter irregularity reports shared by the recruiting command have a strong deterring effect because everyone knows what will happen if they commit an irregularity.

In order to make improvements and promote knowledge sharing, leaders at all levels of an organization need to receive information on a regular basis about the problems that may be occurring across the organization.³³ Although the other service components have some efforts in place to communicate and share limited information on recruiter irregularities that occur within their service component, information on the range of recruiter irregularities occurring is not included or consistently shared with all levels within the recruiting command. For example, according to recruiting command officials, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command holds a quarterly meeting for headquarters officials, including the Commanding General and representatives from the Staff Judge Advocate's office, the Recruiting Standards Division, and the Inspector General's office to review and discuss trends in recruiter irregularities across the recruiting command and determine if there is a need for additional training or changes in policies to address any issues found. We also found that all service components, at a minimum, occasionally share examples of serious recruiter irregularities that have occurred or have been showcased by the media as part of the continuous training provided to recruiters on

³²The Air Force Recruiting Service develops and distributes the following reports on recruiter irregularities with personally identifying information left out: a monthly report to the Commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service, recruiting squadron commanders, and recruiting group commanders, which covers recruiter irregularities that resulted or may potentially result in a courts-martial; a monthly newsletter to all recruiting personnel, which covers recruiter irregularities that resulted in courts-martial, removal from recruiting, or removal from service; a quarterly report to all recruiting personnel, which covers recruiter irregularities that resulted in a letter of reprimand or a more serious action.

³³GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, GAO/GGD-96-118 (Washington, D.C.: June 1996); and GAO, *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, GAO-05-927 (Washington, D.C.: September 9, 2005).

recruiter irregularity issues. However, without processes that allow for the regular flow of recruiter irregularity data from the headquarters to all command levels, commanders may not be able to take full advantage of servicewide recruiter irregularity data that would enable them to improve their operations. Further, commanders may not be able to seize opportunities to learn from their peers about shared experiences on handling recruiter irregularities.

OSD Implemented Recruiter Irregularity Reporting Requirements, but Lacks Complete Oversight over Irregularities

OSD Has Implemented Recruiter Irregularity Reporting Requirements, Sponsored Research, and Provided Information-Sharing Opportunities on Recruiter Irregularity Issues

In December 2006, OSD issued the memorandum regarding the tracking and reporting of recruiter irregularities by the service components.³⁴ The issuance of the memorandum constituted OSD's response to our 2006 recommendation for OSD to establish an oversight framework to assess recruiter irregularities, including criteria and common definitions across the service components. Such oversight is needed for OSD to have the tools for assessing and evaluating recruiting programs to assure itself that program objectives are being met—consistent with good management practices outlined in federal internal control standards.³⁵ The memorandum defined recruiter irregularities, established specific categories for classifying irregularities and dispositions, and included a reporting template for the service components to use when providing recruiter irregularity data to OSD on a semiannual basis—in January and July of each year. OSD involved the service components in the development of the memorandum by convening a meeting of

³⁴Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, *Tracking and Reporting of Recruiter Irregularities* (Dec. 21, 2006).

³⁵GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

representatives from each of the service components to obtain their input on this guidance, including input on the proposed terminology and the reporting categories. OSD officials said that the issuance of the memorandum was important to their oversight over recruiter irregularities because it enabled them to monitor recruiter irregularities across the service components over time.

Recruiting command officials we contacted reported familiarity with the memorandum, and the service components have been providing recruiter irregularity data to OSD semiannually, as required. Recruiting command officials we interviewed reported using the definitions in the memorandum when submitting their recruiter irregularity data to OSD. In our review of the service components' data compiled by OSD, we found that since the memorandum was issued, all of the service components have been submitting semiannual reports following the memorandum's reporting format. Recruiting command officials we interviewed also reported updating data submitted to OSD to reflect recently closed cases in accordance with the requirements set forth in the memorandum.

In addition to obtaining and reviewing the recruiter irregularity data submitted by the service components, OSD contracted with RAND to conduct an analysis of recruiter irregularities across the service components. Among the issues that RAND is examining are the effects of recruiter irregularities on military readiness, public perceptions of the military, and the effect that factors, such as deployment history and recruiter incentives, have on the occurrence of recruiter irregularities. RAND is expected to produce its report in February 2010. OSD officials said that once they obtain the results of both RAND's and GAO's reviews, they will convene another meeting of stakeholders from each of the service components to discuss recruiter irregularity issues, including the service components' experiences with reporting data on recruiter irregularities. Following this meeting, OSD officials stated that a DOD instruction for the reporting of recruiter irregularity data will be issued.³⁶

OSD also provides several opportunities for the sharing of information on recruiter irregularities. For example, MEPCOM holds an annual Commanders' Conference for representatives from the service components to discuss a variety of issues, including recruiter irregularity

³⁶The memorandum states that the guidance that it contains shall be incorporated into a DOD instruction, but does not specify when such an instruction should be issued.

issues.³⁷ Another example is the annual Leadership Conference, which brings together recruiting command officials to discuss various recruiting-related issues. Although OSD officials explained that recruiter irregularities is not the only topic addressed at these events and not every conference or meeting will have recruiter irregularities on the agenda, these events provide opportunities for officials from the service components to share their experiences in addressing recruiter irregularities. Some recruiting command officials said that they would like additional information on what others are doing with respect to recruiter irregularities. For example, Navy officials said that they would like OSD to share lessons learned in addressing recruiter irregularities among the service components, and Air Force officials also said that it would help if OSD regularly provided the service components with DOD-wide recruiter irregularity data to enable them to see if the other service components are experiencing similar problems.³⁸

OSD Lacks Complete Oversight over Recruiter Irregularities Due to a Lack of Clarity in the Memorandum

Although issuing the memorandum was an important first step in providing effective oversight over recruiter irregularities and establishing the means for assessing OSD's programs related to recruiter irregularities, OSD still lacks complete oversight over the recruiter irregularities that are occurring because of inconsistencies in what is reported to OSD and how reports are prepared. We found that the inconsistencies in reporting were the result of differences in how the service components interpreted the requirements in the memorandum, interpreted the reporting categories in the memorandum, and reported cases involving more than one type of irregularity or disposition. Without more clarity, the service components may not be reporting the recruiter irregularity data in the same manner, precluding meaningful comparisons among them.

We found that the service components and the National Guard states do not all interpret the requirements of the memorandum in the same manner; specifically, some recruiting officials were uncertain about the types of issues involving recruiters to include in the reporting. For example, while the majority of the service components reported only on irregularities

³⁷MEPCOM is overseen by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, which is one of the offices within OSD.

³⁸OSD officials said that they shared the data on recruiter irregularities with the service components. However, they said that the recruiting command personnel change frequently as existing personnel are reassigned to other posts, which may necessitate more frequent sharing of information.

committed by a recruiter when dealing with an applicant or a recruit, the Air Force Reserve, the Air National Guard States,³⁹ and five out of seven Army National Guard States whose files we reviewed reported on all cases of recruiter irregularities,⁴⁰ including cases in which no applicant or recruit was involved. Examples of these cases included recruiters committing offenses such as adultery with a non-applicant, inappropriate relationship with other military personnel, use of a government vehicle for personal benefit, or submission of fraudulent receipts for travel. OSD officials said that the memorandum is clear on the need to report only those recruiter irregularities in which an applicant is involved and the memorandum defines recruiter irregularities as those willful and unwillful acts of omission and improprieties that are perpetrated or alleged to be perpetrated by a recruiter to facilitate the recruiting process for an applicant. However, in some of our interviews with recruiting command officials, we found that they were not clear about the need to report only irregularities in which an applicant or a new recruit was involved. Some officials explained that they included all cases of recruiter irregularities because they wanted to be as transparent as possible in reporting every case of a recruiter irregularity to OSD. In addition, we identified at least one instance in which a state Air National Guard unit was not reporting any recruiter irregularity cases that were unsubstantiated, even though the memorandum specifically includes a category for unsubstantiated cases. In our discussions with officials in that location, they explained that they did not believe that those cases should be reported to anyone at the National Guard Bureau, and that it would help if OSD, through the National Guard Bureau, provided clear guidance to the States and Territories on the reporting of unsubstantiated cases.

We also found that the reporting categories in the memorandum were seen as too broad and that the service components did not interpret these categories in the same manner. First, some recruiting officials said that the reporting categories in the memorandum are too broad to provide them with a clear picture of the types of recruiter irregularities that are occurring. For example, officials at the Recruiting Standards Division of

³⁹ An official from the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service did not know whether all Air National Guard States and Territories were reporting on cases of recruiter irregularities that did not involve applicants or recruits.

⁴⁰ One of the Army National Guard States whose case files we reviewed only included cases involving applicants; however, an official with that State indicated that he would generally include all cases of recruiter irregularities in his report to the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division, even those not involving applicants or recruits.

the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and officials at the Navy Recruiting Command said that while they use the memorandum's categories for reporting to OSD, they continue to rely on their own internal reporting categories. The Recruiting Standards Division has 12 categories and the Navy has more than 20 categories that are used internally to provide a picture of the recruiter irregularities that are occurring within their service components. For example, while the memorandum has a single category for all types of concealment or falsification, the Recruiting Standards Division distinguishes among the specific types of information concealed, such as medical information, prior police records, information on dependents, or history of prior service. Likewise, while the memorandum's categories do not specifically address cases where the recruiter did not obtain appropriate parental consent for applicants under the age of 18, the Navy has a specific category for parental consent issues. Second, officials associated with the service components that continue to use their internal reporting categories acknowledged that decisions on how to place cases into one of the eight reporting categories as required by the memorandum can be subjective. For example, Navy officials told us that it is generally up to the individual who compiles the service component's data for OSD to decide how cases should be transferred from the Navy categories into the broader categories outlined in the memorandum. Furthermore, an official with the Inspector General's office of the Navy Recruiting Command told us that the office's staff found the definitions and the reporting categories in the memorandum confusing and that the Navy's interpretation of these categories would likely differ from that of the other service components.

Some recruiting officials said that the memorandum also lacks clarity on how to report cases involving more than one type of irregularity or more than one type of disposition. OSD officials said that they expect the service components to report the more serious recruiter irregularity category when more than one category applies, and although we found that the service components generally did that, this was not clearly communicated in the memorandum. For example, Army and Air Force officials said that while they would handle such situations by reporting the most egregious type in cases involving more than one type of recruiter irregularity committed by the same recruiter, they have not received guidance from OSD on this. Additionally, such determinations will likely be made subjectively. For example, reasonable officials may differ in their opinion on whether falsification of documents is a more or less egregious case of a recruiter irregularity than a false promise made to an applicant. Similarly, some recruiting officials reported lack of clarity on how to report cases involving more than one type of disposition. OSD officials told us they expect the service components to report the final disposition

of a case. However, several recruiting officials said that this has not been clearly communicated to them. For example, officials from one of the Marine Corps recruiting districts that we visited said that the memorandum is not clear on the reporting of cases where more than one type of disposition applies, such as a recruiter first receiving punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and then being removed from recruiting. Several recruiting officials responsible for reporting said that they are reporting preliminary actions against the recruiter even if the data would later need to be changed once the final action in the case is determined. For example, a Marine Corps recruiting official and an official with the U.S. Army Recruiting Command's Staff Judge Advocate Office explained that they would report the preliminary actions at the time of required reporting. In fact, two Army case files that we reviewed showed that while the cases were ultimately found to be unsubstantiated, they were initially reported to OSD as having resulted in non-adverse administrative action because recruiters were temporarily suspended from recruiting while charges of inappropriate sexual relationship and sexual assault against them were investigated.⁴¹ However, other service components may not be approaching this situation in the same manner. For example, Air Force recruiting officials told us that they only report the final disposition to OSD and not the preliminary actions. The memorandum does not explicitly address how such situations should be handled in reporting.

OSD officials acknowledged that the service components may have questions related to reporting, particularly given the relative newness of the memorandum. OSD officials told us that after the memorandum was issued in December 2006, their plan was to monitor the service components' experiences with reporting and issue a DOD instruction that would incorporate the guidance in the memorandum and clarify any reporting issues that the service components might be experiencing. However, 3 years after its issuance, the memorandum has not been turned into a DOD instruction for the service components to follow when reporting to OSD. At the time of this reporting, OSD officials told us that they plan to wait for the issuance of this report and the RAND study before issuing the instruction. However, the continuing absence of definitive guidance may result in poor data quality that would prevent OSD from

⁴¹Both soldiers were then reinstated to their recruiting duties after allegations against them were found to be unsubstantiated, and the disposition was updated in the subsequent report to OSD.

having complete and consistent information on recruiter irregularities across the service components and the National Guard and compromise its ability to maintain appropriate oversight over this important issue.

OSD Also Lacks Complete National Guard Data

OSD does not receive complete information from the National Guard. The memorandum applies to all service components, including the Army and Air National Guards. Officials with the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service told us that following the issuance of the memorandum, they began to request recruiter irregularity data from all States and Territories, and provided them with the definitions and the reporting template from the memorandum. The data from individual States and Territories are then aggregated by the Army and Air National Guard officials and forwarded to OSD.⁴² However, not all States and Territories in the Army National Guard report their recruiter irregularity data. As seen in figure 5, our review of the recruiter irregularity data that the Army National Guard States and Territories provided to the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division in January 2009 showed that 18 of the 54 States and Territories did not provide the data for fiscal year 2008.⁴³ During the July 2009 reporting cycle, 16 of the 54 States and Territories did not report their recruiter irregularity data. Of the 38 that reported data, the reporting period identified by the States and Territories on their reports varied from State to State. For example, some reports submitted in August 2009 covered the first 3 quarters of fiscal year 2009, others covered only the 2nd and 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2009, and others only covered the 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2009. Moreover, two reports were not labeled, making it unclear what reporting period they covered. Army National Guard officials acknowledged problems with State reporting, but said that although they provide guidance based on the memorandum to the States and Territories, they rely on them to submit their data in accordance with that guidance.

⁴²Unless otherwise noted, Army and Air National Guard officials refer to officials from the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service within the National Guard Bureau.

⁴³Another State submitted a report for fiscal year 2008 in August 2009, 6 months after it was due in January 2009.

Figure 5: Army National Guard States and Territories Reporting Recruiter Irregularity Data for Fiscal Year 2008 during the January 2009 Reporting Cycle



Source: GAO analysis of recruiter irregularity data submitted to the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division by the States and Territories.

Note: Of the 36 States and Territories that reported their recruiter irregularity data during the January 2009 reporting cycle, 3 only provided the data for part of fiscal year 2008, and 4 did not provide documentation of whether their data cover the full fiscal year 2008.

OSD also lacks a complete picture of the total number of recruiter irregularities occurring in the Air National Guard because of concerns regarding the quality of the data. Although, according to the Air National Guard, all States and Territories report their recruiter irregularity data, OSD has raised questions about the quality of the Air National Guard data. For example, when the Air National Guard initially reported zero

irregularities for both fiscal years 2007 and 2008, OSD officials expressed doubts about the absence of even a single allegation of a recruiter irregularity in the Air National Guard, particularly given that the report should include not only substantiated cases but also those that are ultimately found to be unsubstantiated. Following electronic communication from OSD regarding this issue, the Air National Guard reported two cases of recruiter irregularities for fiscal year 2008. Moreover, Air National Guard officials have not maintained supporting documentation for the information reported by each State and Territory. For example, one Territory did not submit a report (either by mail or electronically) during the January 2009 reporting cycle. An Air National Guard official at the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service told us that this Territory reported having no recruiter irregularities in a telephone conversation with his office, but documentation of this conversation does not exist. The absence of such documentation raises questions about the accuracy and completeness of the data that the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service receives.

Both Army and Air National Guard officials told us that although they follow up with the States and Territories, they cannot force them to comply. Officials said that they follow up with States and Territories via e-mail or telephone if the reports appear to contain obvious mistakes, such as the totals not adding up to the numbers reported in each individual reporting category. They also follow up if no reports have been submitted. However, they said that it is ultimately up to individual States and Territories to submit their reports because the National Guard Bureau has no command and control authority over them. Specifically, while the National Guard Bureau personnel operate under Title 10 of the U.S. Code, the National Guard personnel at the state level typically operate under Title 32. Consequently, even though the National Guard Bureau can direct States and Territories to submit their recruiter irregularity data in accordance with the memorandum, officials told us that they have no mechanism to force States and Territories to comply.

While the National Guard Bureau cannot force States and Territories to comply with the reporting requirements in the memorandum, it has not been transparent with respect to the total numbers reported to OSD, thus preventing OSD from having a complete picture of recruiter irregularities that occur in the National Guard. The Army and Air National Guard officials aggregate the data that they receive from the States and Territories and report the total numbers to OSD. However, no information is provided on how many States or Territories did not submit their recruiter irregularity reports or whether any of these reports failed to

cover the full reporting period. OSD officials acknowledged that the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service within the National Guard Bureau obtain recruiter irregularity data from the States and Territories and that each State and Territory maintains its own processes for collecting these data. However, while aware of this, OSD does not request that the National Guard officials provide caveats or any other explanatory notes on the limitations of the recruiter irregularity data when submitting these data to OSD. Consequently, OSD's own reports summarizing the recruiter irregularity data received from the service components and the National Guard do not disclose any limitations of the data on which they are based.

Conclusions

Recruiters work in a challenging environment and play a critical role in providing the military services with qualified men and women prepared to serve their country. Although instances of recruiter wrongdoing are infrequent, even a single case can undermine the trust that the American public has in its military. The service components recognize this reality, and all have made substantial progress since 2006 in increasing their oversight over recruiter irregularities. In particular, all service components have established procedures for reporting cases of recruiter irregularities up the chain of command. While these systems assure that their recruiting command headquarters receive regular reports on recruiter irregularities, the Air Force is unique in sharing recruiter irregularity data regularly with all of the different levels of command to provide opportunities for commanders at all levels to compare their progress in addressing recruiter irregularities with the other recruiting units and to learn from their experiences. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps could benefit from doing likewise. OSD has also taken steps to increase its oversight over recruiter irregularities occurring across the service components by implementing semiannual reporting requirements and establishing common definitions for the service components to use. While these are important first steps, in order for the reporting requirements to have a meaningful effect, it is critical that the services fully understand them and uniformly report accurate data. Without OSD monitoring and promptly addressing problems that the service components may experience with respect to reporting their recruiter irregularity data, the quality of the data received by OSD from the service components could be compromised. Furthermore, OSD's ability to rely on the data provided will be significantly diminished if OSD does not receive complete information on which National Guard States and Territories submit the data and how complete their data are. While the National Guard Bureau cannot force States and Territories to comply with the reporting requirements, at the very least it must be transparent about the completeness of the data that it provides to OSD. Without such

transparency from the National Guard Bureau, OSD will not be able to meaningfully analyze recruiter irregularity trends across the service components and identify areas where corrective action may be needed.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following four actions:

1. direct the Secretaries of the Army and Navy to identify mechanisms for the regular sharing of the recruiter irregularity data throughout all levels of command, and
2. direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to:
 - complete and issue the instruction on tracking and reporting data on recruiter irregularities to clarify the requirements for the types of recruiter irregularities to be reported and the placement of recruiter irregularity cases and actions taken into reporting categories;
 - direct the relevant offices within the National Guard Bureau to adjust their reporting procedures in ways that will provide transparency in the data reported to OSD and any limitations on the data; and
 - include the appropriate disclosures concerning data limitations in the recruiter irregularity reports that OSD produces on the basis of the National Guard data for the Congress and others.

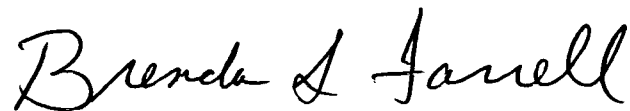
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of the report, DOD concurred with each of our four recommendations. Specifically, DOD stated that it will address these recommendations through a DOD instruction that it plans to publish. Regarding our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Army and the Navy to identify mechanisms for the regular sharing of recruiter irregularity data throughout all levels of command, DOD stated that the sharing of these data already occurs, and that the Army and the Navy have clarified their reporting processes. We agree that the service components have made progress in establishing systems that have allowed for more consistent tracking and reporting of the recruiter irregularity data, and our report highlighted instances of such data being shared within the service components. However, we continue to believe that in order for commanders to continually evaluate and improve their recruiting operations, processes must be in place for the regular flow of such information. DOD said that its soon-to-be-published instruction will require the service components to formalize their processes for disseminating the recruiter irregularity data to the appropriate levels of command. We believe that these formal processes will constitute an important step in ensuring that recruiter irregularity information is shared in a consistent and timely manner. DOD also agreed

with our recommendations that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to (1) complete and issue the instruction on tracking and reporting recruiter irregularity data that clarifies the reporting requirements, (2) direct the relevant offices within the National Guard Bureau to adjust their reporting procedures in order to provide greater transparency in the data reported, and (3) include the appropriate disclosures concerning any limitations in the data it receives. DOD said that it decided to wait to issue the instruction until this GAO study is complete, in order to incorporate our recommendations, and that it plans to publish the instruction during fiscal year 2010 after reconvening representatives from the service components to discuss their reporting processes and procedures for the tracking and reporting of recruiter irregularity data. DOD's comments in their entirety appear in appendix IV.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3604 or by e-mail at farrellb@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 who made major contributions to the report are listed in appendix V.



Brenda S. Farrell, Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

For this review, we analyzed recruiter irregularities across all of the service components: the Army and Army Reserve, the Navy and Navy Reserve, the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve, and the Air Force and Air Force Reserve. In addition, we analyzed recruiter irregularities in the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. For the purposes of this review, the term recruiter irregularity is defined according to the memorandum issued by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) 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.

To conduct our work, we examined relevant guidance issued by OSD, the service components, the Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard; reviewed and analyzed data on recruiter irregularities reported by the service components to OSD from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2009; and reviewed reports issued by GAO and the Department of Defense (DOD) related to recruiting and recruiter irregularities, including surveys conducted by DOD on recruiters' quality of life across the service components.¹ In addition, we conducted a case file review of all substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities reported by the service components for fiscal year 2008, and a case file review of all substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities reported by seven States on recruiter irregularities committed by recruiters in the Army National Guard for fiscal year 2008.² We interviewed OSD officials in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and conducted site visits to service components' recruiting commands and the Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) to interview recruiting command officials and recruiters from all the service components. We selected our interviews with 24 recruiters using a nonprobability convenience sample to accommodate our 10 site visits.³ In the course of our work, we contacted or visited the organizations and offices listed in table 9.

¹Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies, *2008 Recruiter Quality of Life Survey Topline Report* (August 2008); and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies, *2005 Recruiter Quality of Life Survey Topline Report* (February 2006).

²The Air National Guard was excluded from the case file review as they had reported zero recruiter irregularities for fiscal year 2008 at the time of our case file review. The Air National Guard later reported two recruiter irregularities for fiscal year 2008 after the case file review had been completed.

³Out of the 24 recruiters that we interviewed, 8 held supervisory positions, such as recruiting station commander and flight chief.

Table 9: Organizations and Offices Contacted

Name of organization or office	Location
Air Force	
Air Force Recruiting Service	Randolph Air Force Base, TX
Air Force Recruiting School	Lackland Air Force Base, TX
Air Force 369th Recruiting Group	Lackland Air Force Base, TX
Air Force 341st Recruiting Squadron	Lackland Air Force Base, TX
Air Force Recruiting B-Flight	San Antonio, TX ^a
Air Force Recruiting Stations	Schaumburg, IL
	Louisville, KY
	Mira Mesa, CA
	Washington, D.C.
Air Force Reserve	
Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service	Warner Robins, GA
Air Force Reserve Recruiting Station	San Antonio, TX
Air National Guard	
National Guard Bureau–Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service	Arlington, VA
Air National Guard Recruiting Station 149th Fighter Wing	Lackland Air Force Base, TX
Army	
Army Recruiting Command	Fort Knox, KY
Army Recruiting and Retention School	Fort Jackson, SC
Army 1st Recruiting Brigade	Fort Meade, MD
Army 3rd Medical Recruiting Brigade	Fort Knox, KY
Army Baltimore Recruiting Battalion	Fort Meade, MD
Army Recruiting Stations	Elizabethtown, KY
	Lemon Grove, CA
	Radcliff, KY
	Washington, D.C.
	Chicago, IL ^a
Army National Guard	
National Guard Bureau–Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division	Arlington, VA
Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Training Center	Little Rock, AR
Illinois Army National Guard, Recruiting	Chicago, IL ^a
Army National Guard Recruiting Station	Chicago, IL ^a
Marine Corps	
Marine Corps Recruiting Command	Quantico, VA
Marine Corps Recruiters School	San Diego, CA

Name of organization or office	Location
Marine Corps Western Recruiting Region	San Diego, CA
12th Marine Corps Recruiting District	San Diego, CA
4th Marine Corps Recruiting District	New Cumberland, PA
Marine Corps Recruiting Stations	Frederick, MD
	San Diego, CA
Marine Corps Recruiting Substations	Louisville, KY
	Chicago, IL ^a
	Poway, CA
	Washington, D.C.
Navy	
Navy Recruiting Command	Millington, TN
Navy Recruiting Command, Recruit Quality Assurance Team	Great Lakes, IL
Navy Recruiting District Chicago	North Chicago, IL
Navy Recruiting Stations	Escondido, CA
	Louisville, KY
	Washington, D.C.
National Guard Bureau	
Office of the Chief Counsel	Arlington, VA
Office of the Secretary of Defense	
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness	Washington, D.C.
Military Entrance Processing Command	North Chicago, IL
Military Entrance Processing Stations	Fort Meade, MD
	Des Plaines, IL
	Louisville, KY
	San Diego, CA

Source: GAO.

^aFor cases where we interviewed recruiters away from their recruiting station location, the metropolitan location is indicated.

To assess the number and types of recruiter irregularities occurring in the service components, we obtained and reviewed recruiter irregularity data reported by the service components to OSD from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2009, and the service components' accessions data for the same time period. We were unable to present trends in recruiter irregularities from fiscal year 2006 through fiscal year 2009 and decided not to present data for fiscal year 2009 because (1) the memorandum issued by OSD in December 2006 required the service components to retroactively collect recruiter irregularity data for fiscal year 2006 to report to OSD, which may have resulted in the fiscal year 2006 data being less complete than the data

in subsequent fiscal years and (2) recruiter irregularity data reported by the service components for fiscal year 2009 do not include data from the fourth quarter of the fiscal year, which will not be reported until January 2010. We interviewed officials within the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service about their data system for tracking and maintaining recruiter irregularity data and determined that these data were not reliable. Specifically, we were unable to present data on recruiter irregularities reported by the National Guard because recruiter irregularity data are maintained at the state level of command and we did not review each state's processes and procedures for collecting and maintaining these data. Furthermore, while some States and Territories reported their recruiter irregularity data to the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service within the National Guard Bureau in accordance with the memorandum, others did not consistently report their data or did not report them at all. In addition, we assessed the reliability of each service component's recruiter irregularity data system, including the systems' ability to track and maintain recruiter irregularities. For each service component, we also interviewed personnel responsible for maintaining and overseeing these data systems. Additionally, we assessed the quality control measures in place to ensure that the data are reliable for reporting purposes. We found the recruiter irregularity data reported by the service components to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this review.

To provide illustrative examples of the types of recruiter irregularities that occur across the service components and the actions taken against recruiters involved in recruiter irregularities, we conducted a case file review of all substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities reported by each of the service components and closed in fiscal year 2008. We reviewed a total of 346 case files for all the service components: Air Force (16), Air Force Reserve (7), Army (138), Army National Guard (53), Marine Corps (69), and Navy (63). The number of case files that we reviewed for fiscal year 2008 did not always reflect the total number of cases reported to OSD for the same year because some cases may have been closed and reported to OSD following our review of the case files. Although we included the Army National Guard in our case file review, we selected a nongeneralizable sample of States for our case file review because the National Guard Bureau does not maintain centralized data on cases of recruiter irregularities. We selected States that reported more than four substantiated recruiter irregularities for fiscal year 2008. These States and their corresponding number of substantiated cases of recruiter irregularities as reported for fiscal year 2008 are: Alabama (10), California

(20), Indiana (7), Minnesota (6), Oklahoma (8), Pennsylvania (5), and Wisconsin (7).⁴

To assess the extent to which the service components have guidance in place to identify and address recruiter irregularities, we reviewed the guidance issued by the service components on recruiter irregularities and their procedures for reporting allegations, conducting investigations, and adjudicating cases of recruiter irregularities within the recruiting commands. We interviewed recruiting command officials and recruiters from the service components to gain their perspective on the causes of recruiter irregularities, the guidance in place to address them, and training and prevention programs aimed at reducing them. We also obtained their views on the fairness of the actions taken against recruiters as a result of their involvement in recruiter irregularity incidents, the deterring effect of those actions taken, and the consistency with which actions are applied. To determine the extent to which the relevant offices within the National Guard Bureau maintain oversight over recruiter irregularities occurring in the Army and Air National Guards, we examined the guidance issued by the Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division and the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Service. However, we did not review National Guard guidance issued by the 54 individual National Guard States and Territories due to time and staffing limitations.

To assess the extent to which OSD maintains oversight of recruiter irregularities occurring across the service components, we reviewed the December 2006 memorandum issued by OSD that requires each service component to submit a semiannual report to OSD on recruiter irregularities. We conducted interviews with officials from OSD's Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, as well as officials from MEPCOM and 4 military entrance processing stations. We also interviewed service component officials to obtain their perspective on the memorandum and their experiences in addressing the reporting requirements it sets forth. We also interviewed OSD and National Guard officials on reporting issues within the National Guard.

⁴Although the total number of substantiated recruiter irregularities reported by these States was 63 in fiscal year 2008, we received and reviewed 53 case files. This is because in some case files, there was more than one recruiter involved in the recruiter irregularity incident. While the service components may maintain a single case file for a case involving multiple recruiters, they report to OSD on each individual recruiter who committed or was alleged to have committed a recruiter irregularity.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2009 through January 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Examples of Recruiter Irregularities in Fiscal Year 2008

Table 10 provides examples that we identified in the course of our review of the service components' files of recruiter irregularities for fiscal year 2008—in addition to those provided in table 6 of this report—illustrating each recruiter irregularity category in the Office of the Secretary of Defense's memorandum.

Table 10: Examples of Substantiated Recruiter Irregularities by Type, Fiscal Year 2008

Recruiter irregularity category	Example
Criminal misconduct	A recruiter became aggressive with a recruit and engaged in a verbal altercation with the recruit's boyfriend (Navy). A recruiter committed multiple irregularities, which included sexually harassing a recruit and high school students, meeting with female recruits without adequate supervision, influencing a recruit to lie to recruiter irregularity investigators, and failing to safely transport applicants in a government vehicle (Army).
Sexual misconduct	A recruiter consumed alcohol with applicants and engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct (Air Force). A recruiter engaged in a sexual relationship with a 16 year-old applicant (Marine Corps).
Sexual harassment	A recruiter inappropriately touched a recruit while taking an unsupervised body fat measurement of the recruit (Navy). A recruiter made sexually suggestive comments to an applicant (Marine Corps).
Fraternization or unauthorized relationship with an applicant	A recruiter visited an applicant's home twice without supervision and kissed the applicant (Army National Guard). A recruiter purchased alcohol for an underage recruit and consumed it with him (Marine Corps).
Concealment or falsification	A recruiter falsified the results of a required physical fitness test for two recruits (Army). A recruiter withheld medical documents from an applicant's application packet; the applicant had been previously temporarily disqualified from service for a hairline fracture (Air Force).
False promise/coercion	A recruiter employed a false document and an individual who impersonated a Navy officer to falsely assure a recruit that the recruit would be able to change her military occupation upon her arrival at basic training (Navy). A recruiter conducted himself inappropriately with a recruit who expressed a reluctance to ship to basic training before he had cleared up a family issue (Army).
Testing irregularity	A recruiter arranged for another individual to take the ASVAB for a recruit (Army National Guard). A recruiter provided a recruit with an unauthorized ASVAB study guide (Marine Corps).
Quality control measures	A recruiter was found to have in his possession a template of a child custody form, despite this being a violation of Army regulations (Army). A recruiter authorized the enlistment of a recruit who was subsequently disqualified at the MEPS for testing positive on a drug test (Air Force Reserve).

Source: GAO analysis of recruiter irregularity case files provided by the service components.

Appendix III: Examples of Dispositions in Fiscal Year 2008

Table 11 provides examples that we identified in the course of our review of the service components' files of recruiter irregularities for fiscal year 2008—in addition to those provided in table 8 of this report—illustrating the violation disposition categories set out in the Office of the Secretary of Defense's memorandum.

Table 11: Examples of Dispositions, Fiscal Year 2008

Disposition category	Example
Court martial/civil conviction	For engaging in an intimate relationship with an applicant, a recruiter was court-martialed, reduced in rank, confined for 30 days, given 30 days of hard labor, and made to forfeit \$1,000 per month for 3 months (Air Force).
	For providing a recruit with the answers to the ASVAB, a recruiter was court-martialed, reduced in rank, and discharged with an "other than honorable discharge" (Army).
Removed from service	For submitting false high school diplomas in order to fraudulently enlist five recruits who did not meet minimum educational enlistment qualifications, a recruiter was removed from service (Marine Corps)
	For instructing two recruits to conceal their criminal records at their MEPS processing, a recruiter was removed from service (Navy).
Removed from recruiting	For allowing a recruit to use his government vehicle and government credit card, a recruiter was removed from recruiting duty (Marine Corps).
	For falsifying high school verification letters for five applicants, a recruiter was removed from recruiting (Army).
Article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment	For falsifying information about references on a recruit's background investigation forms, a recruiter received article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment, whereby he was reduced in rank, made to forfeit \$500 per month for 2 months, and reprimanded (Air Force).
	For forging multiple signatures in a recruit's application packet, a recruiter received article 15 Non-Judicial Punishment, whereby he was reduced in rank and made to forfeit half of one month's pay for 2 months (Navy).
Adverse administrative action	For allowing a recruit to ship to basic training despite the recruit having an unresolved criminal violation on her record, a recruiter received a letter of reprimand from his recruiting battalion commander (Army).
	For failing to perform an adequate medical pre-screening of recruits, a recruiter received a letter of reprimand from his recruiting squadron commander (Air Force).
Non-adverse administrative action	For enlisting an applicant who was not eligible for enlistment, a recruiter received counseling. (Army National Guard).
Administrative or processing error	For failing to properly question an applicant, and thus failing to uncover that the applicant had not completed a legal probation sentence, a recruiter was judged to have committed a recruiter error (Army).
	For failing to conduct an initial fitness test for a recruit, a recruiter was judged to have committed a recruiter error. (Navy)

Source: GAO analysis of recruiter irregularity case files provided by the service components.

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Defense



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

Ms. Brenda S. Farrell
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

JAN 14 2010

Dear Ms. Farrell:

This is the Department of Defense's (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report, "MILITARY RECRUITING: Clarified Reporting Requirements and Increased Transparency Could Strengthen Oversight over Recruiter Irregularities," dated December 8, 2009 (GAO Code 351327/GAO-10-254).

The Department concurs with the report's recommendations. We will work with each of the Services to improve the sharing of recruiter irregularity data, to clarify our reporting guidance, and to provide greater data transparency regarding data limitations. This guidance will be promulgated in a new DoD Instruction.

We certainly agree with the GAO statement that instances of recruiter wrongdoing are infrequent, but that even a single case can undermine the trust that the American public has in its military. We take this issue very seriously and, as noted in the report, we have made substantial progress since the GAO's 2006 report addressing this same 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 during FY 2010.

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

Sincerely,

Gail H. McGinn
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Plans)
Performing the Duties of the
Under Secretary of Defense
(Personnel and Readiness)

Enclosure:
As stated



GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED DECEMBER 8, 2009
GAO-10-254 (GAO CODE 351327)

**“MILITARY RECRUITING: CLARIFIED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
AND INCREASED TRANSPARENCY COULD STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT
OVER RECRUITER IRREGULARITIES”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATIONS**

RECOMMENDATION 1: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Army and Navy to identify mechanisms for the regular sharing of the recruiter irregularity data throughout all levels of command (p. 46/GAO Draft Report).

DOD RESPONSE: Concur

Currently, each of the Services shares the recruiter irregularity data throughout all levels of command. Both Army and Navy have clarified their processes, and we are confident these processes accomplish the intent identified by GAO. However, in its soon to be published instruction, DoD plans to require each Service to formally establish a process which will ensure the widest possible dissemination of these data to the appropriate levels of command and other outside agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 2: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to complete and issue the instruction on tracking and reporting data on recruiter irregularities to clarify the requirements for the types of recruiter irregularities to be reported and the placement of recruiter irregularity cases and actions taken into reporting categories (p. 46/GAO Draft Report).

DOD RESPONSE: Concur

In February 2009, when GAO announced this audit, DoD had already planned to reconvene its workgroup comprised of each of the Services and Components to review current processes and policies prior to publishing an instruction. DoD decided to delay convening the workgroup until the GAO audit was complete so that it could include the recommendations of the audit where appropriate. The new instruction should be published during FY 2010.

RECOMMENDATION 3: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to direct the relevant offices within the National Guard Bureau to adjust their reporting procedures in ways that will provide transparency in the data reported to OSD and any limitations on the data (p. 46/GAO Draft Report).

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DOD RESPONSE: Concur

DoD will work closely with representatives from the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard to ensure the guidance provided in the new instruction is sufficient to ensure complete and accurate reporting of the data. The new guidance will provide justification for each agency to publish internal policies and procedures that will establish more stringent reporting requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 4: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to include the appropriate disclosures concerning data limitations in the recruiter irregularity reports that OSD produces on the basis of the National Guard data for the Congress and others (p. 47/GAO Draft Report).

DOD RESPONSE: Concur

DoD will work closely with representatives from the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard to ensure the guidance provided in the new instruction is sufficient to ensure complete and accurate reporting of the data. The new guidance will provide justification for each agency to publish internal policies and procedures that will establish more stringent reporting requirements. In future reports, if data are incomplete, it will be so noted as data limitations.

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Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Brenda S. Farrell, (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact above, Elizabeth McNally, Assistant Director; Natalya Barden; Seth Carlson; K. Nicole Harms; Joanne Landesman; Katherine Lenane; Amber Lopez; Steven Putansu; Terry Richardson; and Daniel Webb made key contributions to this report.

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