

THE EFFECT OF INCREASING OCS COMMISSIONS ON OUR SENIOR LEADER BENCH

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE EFFECT OF INCREASING OCS COMMISSIONS
ON OUR SENIOR LEADER BENCH**

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As a result of the force drawdown from 1990-1996, the Army established policies to reduce officer accessions. In 1998, the Army began experiencing a shortage of junior officers and increased the number of Lieutenants entering the force. Due to the reduced accession policies put in place during the drawdown, Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) could not meet the demand for the increased requirements. The Army used the Officer Candidate School (OCS) to meet the increased accessions from 1998-2009. Each year the percentage of commissions awarded from OCS increased, where in FY2009, 40% of Lieutenants came from OCS. OCS helped to correct the junior and mid-career officer shortage, but in the future, the Army may see mass retirements of OCS commissioned officers after serving three years in the rank of Major. The Army is already experiencing a shortage of Captains and Majors and when combined with the retirement possibility of OCS commissioned officers, there could be a significant shortage of Lieutenant Colonels and a limited population to select Colonels from. With a limited population to choose Colonels from, less talented officers may be selected, reducing the talent of the senior leaders of the Army.

THE EFFECT OF INCREASING OCS COMMISSIONS ON OUR SENIOR LEADER BENCH

“Ensuring the availability of sufficient numbers of trained, high quality personnel in an environment of increasing deployments and armed conflict may prove to be one of the greatest personnel challenges faced by the U.S. military since the inception of the all volunteer force in 1973.”¹ Unlike other professions, the military recruits, assesses, and trains its own leaders. The policies and procedures for providing officers to the force cannot be changed with the expectation of quick results. Additionally, these decisions will impact the future talent of Army leaders and ultimately the Army’s capabilities.² It is important then to realize that the decisions made at any time on building and developing an Army officer corps will have a lasting impact and are subject to the constantly changing environment.

“Throughout America’s history, U.S. Army officers have played an integral role in the formulation and execution of its national security policy. However, the intersection of multiple factors such as technological advancements, globalization, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a protracted conflict waged with an undersized, all-volunteer Army, and the increased demand in the civilian sector for the skills that junior officers possess, suggest that future national security challenges will be markedly different from those which were met so successfully in the past.”³

This paper discusses a possible officer manning issue in the U.S. Army that could develop due to personnel management policies that have been adopted over the past twenty years. After the Cold War, there was a decrease and then an increase in end strength and the U.S. economy made a significant recovery, consequently the U.S. Army faced challenges in maintaining its officer strength. Specifically during this period,

the Army experienced a shortage of junior officers, which in the long-term, affects the pool to select its Majors and Lieutenant Colonels from. One of the solutions to correct this issue was to increase the number of officer commissions through the Officer Candidate School (OCS). There are two types of OCS programs. The first program selects candidates from the noncommissioned officers serving in the Army; this is the In-Service option (OCS-IS). The second program selects college graduates under the Enlistment Option (OCS-EO). OCS-IS commissioned officers do serve beyond the point where the majority of junior officers were departing, which did partially solve the shortage of Majors. What has not been identified yet is if these OCS-IS commissioned officers depart at a higher rate when they are retirement eligible. OCS-IS commissioned officers will become retirement eligible during the time that they are serving in the rank of Major. If this were to happen, it would significantly reduce the availability of officers to select from to continue to serve as the senior leaders in the force. With a smaller pool to select from, the Army could be driven to select less talented individuals to serve in Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel positions. An officer corps of decreasing capabilities at the senior levels would have a considerable impact on the future operations of the force.

External influences, like continued globalization, technological advancements and combat deployments, will determine if there is little to no impact or if there will be an incredible loss of talent in the senior leadership positions. If the possibility exists at all, with the tremendous impact and the long time to recover with no preparations, the Army should address this concern now and put some procedures in place to prevent it from happening.

Before looking ahead at the possible outcomes and solutions, a review of the historical challenges and the decisions that were made at the time to resolve personnel conflicts will provide a good perspective. Understanding how the Army has arrived at its current position is important for predicting the future and the courses of action available for future policies.

Historical View

For the past twenty years, the Army's officer management system has been challenged to meet the requirements of the all volunteer force. At the end of the Cold War, the Army was directed to draw down its personnel numbers to an end strength that was based on requirements to meet current and predicted threats. "The Active Army was reduced from approximately 777,000 service members to 480,000 during the period between 1989 and 1996 while the officer corps was downsized from 91,000 to 69,000."⁴ The Army experienced a reduction in forces after WWII and the Vietnam War, but these were draft armies and a majority of Soldiers departed when released from their required service. The Army of the Cold War was an all volunteer force and the Army had to find a process to draw down its numbers by enticing individuals to leave the service.

In 1990, Congress took two steps to ease the constraints that law had placed on the services' ability to reduce their officer corps which impacted the force availability through 2006. It granted the services the authority to conduct a reduction in force (RIF) of Captains and Majors with regular army commissions through 1995 and allowed officers to retire after only serving two years in their current rank, instead of the three years established by law, and with 15 years of service.⁵ Additionally, the House

Appropriations Committee opposed involuntary separations stating that reductions should be accomplished through attrition, reduced accessions, and early-out opportunities.⁶ As a result the Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI) and Special Separation Benefit (SSB) programs were established to provide relatively robust financial support incentives for officers to separate, even before completing active duty service obligations.⁷ To meet final down sized strength, the Army did conduct a small percentage of involuntary separations. “By the end of 1995, over 20,000 officers had been voluntarily or involuntarily separated or retired through one of the drawdown programs; a total of 1,681 Lieutenants and 8,959 Captains were included in this total.”⁸ The significant reduction of Lieutenants and Captains during this period had a bearing on the shortage of Majors that was experienced up through 2006.⁹

During this period of drawdown, the U.S. economy saw a significant recovery which helped in the reduction by enticing officers out, but its timing contributed to the issues that would soon be faced in retaining officers. “During Ronald Reagan’s first presidential term, from 1980 to 1984, the nation endured two years of severe recession.”¹⁰ In the last years of the Cold War, the Army maintained a strength of around 770,000 with 91,000 officers. The eighties also witnessed a crisis in the banking industry caused by a combination of factors, including high inflation and interest rates which resulted in high unemployment.¹¹ The U.S. Army of the Cold War in the eighties saw competition for active duty commissioning, even while maintaining an officer strength of 91,000. With high unemployment, college graduates were having a difficult time finding jobs. Many graduates turned to the Army as a stable working environment and with so many wanting to be on active duty, the Army was able to choose the quality

junior leaders it needed to join its ranks. The beginning of the draw down coincided with the recovery of the economy in the early nineties. There are two important aspects of these two events happening simultaneously. First, as unemployment dropped, it provided an avenue for more officers to depart the Army under voluntary methods, allowing the downsizing to be accomplished without massive use of involuntary separations. Second, a recovering economy during the downsizing also set in motion processes for the transition of junior officers into the civilian sector. During the early nineties, many head-hunter firms were established, specifically to work with separating junior officers and place them in managerial positions in major civilian companies. This was a win-win process. The Army needed to reduce its force and civilian companies sought out the leadership training and experience that junior officers had gone through. Ultimately, it created a market and established a process for junior officers to easily move from the military into the civilian work force. With voluntary separations being approved by the Army, in order to reduce its numbers, and a process to facilitate this transfer, the Army was heading down a road where there would be competition for the junior leaders it had developed.

Along with the reduction of the active force from 1990 to 1995, the Army took actions to reduce the number of individuals that were being accessed in order to meet the lower requirements in a down sized force. The annual accession target is the number of new officers that must be brought into the Army each year to ensure that adequate numbers of personnel are available to meet requirements over the 30-year life cycle of that year group. Accessing too few will, at some point in the life cycle continuum, result in a shortage, assuming that attrition levels will remain constant.¹² To

achieve rapid cuts in the total number of officers and still protect the careers of those already serving in the force, the Army cut their accessions during the drawdown by a greater percentage than needed to sustain the new size of their officer corps.¹³ In 1990, prior to the effects of the drawdown, about 10 percent of military officers separated after completing their required commitment. Between 1991 and 1996, the separation rate averaged 11 percent, which is not a significant difference.¹⁴ Cuts in officer accessions allowed personnel managers to reduce the size of the officer corps while keeping faith with the vast majority of officers who were already in the force and committed to a military career.¹⁵ It is worth noting that this was a conscious decision based on a reduced perceived future threat and would have worked fine had the Army not been faced with end strength increases after September 2001. The decision made to draw down the force raises two issues. First, after 1991, the programs put in place to increase voluntary separations had little impact on increasing the attrition rates of Army officers. The percentage of officers that separated from service prior to the drawdown was similar to the number of officers that separated during the drawdown. Secondly, the U.S. Army made the majority of its drawdown accomplishments by limiting the number of individuals it was bringing into the force. To accomplish this, programs and procedures were instilled into officer accessing organizations during the drawdown to reduce the number of commissioned Lieutenants that were produced.

The U.S. Army uses three primary sources for accessing and commissioning officers: the United States Military Academy (USMA) or West Point, ROTC, and OCS.

USMA runs a 4-year program that provides successful candidates with bachelor's degrees and commissions as military officers. In addition to completing their

academic courses, the West Point cadets participate in rigorous military training activities and mandatory athletic activities. In return for their education, the graduates must serve on active duty for five years after graduation.¹⁶ USMA has a highly competitive entrance standard, accepting approximately 1,200 new cadets each year out of over 2,000 qualified applicants.¹⁷ The selection rate of just over 50% allows West Point to choose the best qualified and talented applicants to attend the program each year.

The Army ROTC units are located at 273 civilian colleges and universities throughout the country. Officer candidates enrolled in ROTC programs must meet all graduation requirements of their academic institutions and complete required military training to receive commissions as officers.¹⁸ ROTC training consists of two to five hours of weekly military instruction and some summer training programs in addition to the regular college program. A non-scholarship student can enroll in the program for the first two years at a college as an elective with no military obligation. "There are different scholarships available to the college student to help pay for expenses. These scholarships are competitive and are given to applicants who show a high level of academic ability, are physically qualified, involved in extracurricular activities, and are of good moral character."¹⁹ The Army offers 4-year ROTC scholarships to attract the best and brightest, but also offers 2- and 3-year scholarships as a means of attracting college students into ROTC to fill shortfalls in accession objectives.²⁰ Upon graduation from college, the student will be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and will incur, generally, a four year active duty service obligation.²¹

“As a result of its ability to produce officers in a relatively short period of time, OCS is the Army’s “surge” capability for commissioned officers.”²² The OCS commissioning program was designed to augment the accession requirements of USMA and ROTC. Unlike West Point and ROTC programs which take up to four years to produce an officer, the OCS program focuses strictly on military training and can quickly produce officers. OCS training is conducted over 12 to 14 weeks, where at the completion of training, candidates are awarded a commission as a Second Lieutenant. OCS selects candidates for the training through two programs. The Enlisted Option (OCS-EO) program selects college graduates with no military experience to complete the OCS training and receive a commission as a Second Lieutenant. Currently, OCS-EO makes up over 50% of the commissions achieved through OCS. This percentage has grown significantly from only 10% of OCS commissions in 1998. The officers commissioned through the OCS-EO program are required to complete three years of active duty service after receiving their commission. The In-Service (OCS-IS) program selects candidates for OCS from the enlisted pool of the Army. Enlisted soldiers entering into the OCS training have already served five to ten years on active duty and are then obligated to serve three years as an officer after completing the program.

The percentage of officers commissioned through each of these accession sources was relatively constant from 1988 to 1998. USMA, as mandated by Congress, maintains a cadet strength of 4400, and provides approximately 900-1000 officers each year. For the ten year period, 1988 to 1998, West Point commissioned approximately 950 officers each year, but did see a reduction in commissions and class size as part of the post Cold-War draw down. During this same period, ROTC accessed 70 percent of

the requirements for all components each year with approximately 3,700 Second Lieutenants coming out of its program yearly. OCS was used to make up the remainder of the yearly Department of the Army requirement identified for each of the years during this period, which were approximately 500 officers or 10 percent of the mission.²³

“Additionally, the Army’s three accession programs are decentralized and do not formally coordinate with one another, making it difficult for the Army, using its traditional approach, to effectively manage risks and allocate resources across programs in an integrated, strategic fashion.”²⁴ Starting in FY 1999, the number of officers being commissioned through ROTC began to significantly decline as a result of the reduced accession programs put in place, four years earlier, as part of the drawdown.

Development of the Problem

In 2002, the Army identified that it did not have enough junior officers to meet the future manning requirements for Captains and Majors. A Congressional Research Service reported that the Army projections showed that its officer shortage would be approximately 3,000 line officers in FY 2007, grow to about 3,700 officer in FY 2008 and continue at an annual level of 3,000 or more through FY 2013.²⁵ Initial indicators were that junior leaders were separating from the Army at higher percentages. As previously discussed, there were no dramatic increases in attrition during this time period that would account for the shortage. The reason that the Army was experiencing and forecasting future shortages of Captains and Majors after 2002 was a combination of several factors. First, due to reduced accessions that were started approximately ten years prior as part of post-Cold War force reductions, the Army was commissioning fewer officers.²⁶ At the time the decision was made, in the late 1990s, the number of

reduced accessions was correctly identified for a future force of the same strength and organization at the time the decision was made. What was not known at the time of the decision was that there would be an increased need for officers starting in 2001. This leads to the second factor that created the officer shortage. After the reduction in accessions was implemented, there were two decisions that had an effect on officer strengths. The first decision was the implementation by the Army of the Modular Force Initiative which increased officer requirements across the Army within current manning levels, especially Majors. The second decision was the increase of the force size by congress. The active component of the Army was authorized total growth to just fewer than 549,000 by 2010. This reflected an overall growth of about 63,000 personnel since 2004 and required an increase of about 12,000 commissioned officers.²⁷ The strategic choices made during the drawdown of the military in the 1990's, like sharply reducing the Army ROTC program, coupled with the strategic environment where persistent war was becoming the norm, were largely the causes of junior officer shortages.²⁸

Although officer attrition rates had not significantly changed since the Cold-War era, the Army was experiencing an officer shortage and one of its first goals was to retain junior officers at higher than historical rates to meet the demand caused by reorganization and force expansion. Indeed, the number of required majors rose by 2,144 from 2004 to 2008. Since it takes a decade for the Army to produce a Major, the Army needed to increase accessions and retain more Captains.²⁹ By decreasing the attrition rate of Captains, more would be available to the force and would also be available for promotion to Major. This was a reversal of the trend that had been put in motion just ten years earlier. By this time, the economy had seen a significant

improvement and with unemployment at low levels, the civilian sector was seeking the leadership capabilities of junior officers. To counter the number of officers leaving the force, “one option available was to increase the promotion opportunity, thereby reducing involuntary separations for those not selected and lowering attrition through enhanced promotion opportunity. For example, if Lieutenants are promoted to Captain at a rate above the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1981 goal, the overall shortage of Captains is reduced. Since 2001, the Army has exceeded the DOPMA promotion goals at every rank and almost every year.”³⁰ In addition to selecting higher percentage of individuals for promotion, “the Army is promoting some junior officers faster than it has in the recent past and therefore not allowing junior officers as much time to master their duties and responsibilities at the Captain rank. For example, the Army has reduced the promotion time to the rank of Captain from historical average of 42 months from commissioning to the current average of 38 months. Likewise, the Army has reduced the promotion time to the rank of Major from 11 years to 10 years and has promoted 97 percent of eligible Captains to Major.”³¹ The purpose of promoting higher percentages of individuals to Captain and Major was to increase the number of individuals at each of these grades, which did meet some of the officer shortages, but not all. Two issues developed from these decisions. First, due to increasing the percentage of officers promoted to Captain and Major, there were individuals promoted who previously would not have been selected, thereby reducing the quality and talent of Majors in the force. Second, since promotions were occurring quicker, the Army had to increase the number of Lieutenants entering the force, which meant that accessions had to be increased.

“The general approach that the services used to meet their accession needs was to first depend on the service academy and ROTC programs.”³² When the Army initially approached the requirement to increase accessions, the thought was it would be a short term problem. The initial requirement to increase accessions was initiated by the implementation of the Modular Design Initiative, which impacted the Army starting in 1998. In 2004, the force cap was increased requiring an additional 12,000 officers. The force cap was increased primarily due to the Army being involved in two combat operations simultaneously. Initial thoughts on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were that they would be short duration and after the completion of combat operations the force cap would then be reduced to pre-2004 levels. USMA was maintained at meeting 900-1000 officers each year. Prior to 1998, as part of the draw down, congress ordered USMA to decrease its class sizes and consequently the number of commissioned Lieutenants it was providing to the force. After 2003, with the increase in requirements, USMA received congressional approval to increase its class size and began producing more commissions. USMA’s competitive process for entrance into the institution means that there are more applicants than those that are selected to attend. As a result, West Point could easily increase its production by just selecting more candidates and within four years they would be in line with Army requirements. In 1998, the Army looked to ROTC programs to increase their accessions, but due to decreased budgets as part of the draw down several years earlier, the Army ROTC programs had limited advertising campaigns and scholarship funding.³³ ROTC programs could not react, were not prepared to meet the increased need in accessions and had trouble recruiting while at war. Believing that only a short term fix was required, the Army was not committed to

increasing funds and altering the ROTC programs. When USMA and ROTC are unable to meet the Army's needs for newly commissioned officers, the Army turns to its OCS program to bridge the gap. The OCS program provides the most immediate means for achieving any shortfalls. Unlike the academy and ROTC programs that take up to 4 years to produce an officer, the OCS program can quickly expand or retract.³⁴

Beginning in 1998, the Army started increasing the percentage of officers receiving commissions from OCS in each year group. What was thought to be a short term problem, turned out to be a significant personnel issue for the Army, as combat continued well beyond what was expected and the Army increasingly relied on OCS to meet its shortfall in accessions

The increased use of OCS Commissions from 1999 to 2009

From 1999 to 2009, the Army increased its use of the OCS program each year and the number of officers entering the force. Active component accession targets slowly but steadily increased from 4,000 with YG1999 to 4,500 in FY2003. After a slight drop to 4,300 in FY2004, the accession target stabilized at 4,600 in both FY2005 and 2006. In most of these years, the number of officers actually accessed had fallen slightly short of these targets, but never by more than 5%.³⁵ Commissioning shortfalls in some years from USMA, but mainly in the Army ROTC programs required OCS to rapidly increase the number of officers it commissioned.³⁶ The table below³⁷ illustrates the increasing active duty requirements per YG and the dependence on OCS to meet these growing needs. For YG 1998, OCS provided just fewer than 10% of the new officers, which was in line with historical averages and Army policy. Starting with

Number and Percent of Commissions by Source of Commission for YGs 1998-2010							
YG	USMA		ROTC		OCS		Total
1998	835	20.2%	2,882	69.8%	409	9.9%	4,126
1999	885	22.1%	2,575	64.2%	551	13.7%	4,011
2000	890	21.0%	2,712	64.0%	636	15.0%	4,238
2001	865	20.0%	2,682	62.0%	778	18.0%	4,325
2002	933	21.3%	2,438	55.8%	1,001	22.9%	4,372
2003	833	18.7%	2,633	59.1%	987	22.2%	4,453
2004	898	20.4%	2,683	61.1%	812	18.5%	4,393
2005	874	19.7%	2,602	58.5%	970	21.8%	4,446
2006	848	19.8%	2,092	48.9%	1,339	31.3%	4,279
2007	978	19.2%	2,427	47.5%	1,701	33.3%	5,106
2008	958	19.9%	2,465	51.2%	1,395	29.0%	4,818
2009	980	16.7%	2,446	41.7%	2,437	41.6%	5,863
2010	969	16.6%	2,733	46.9%	2,127	36.5%	5,829

Table 1. Source of Commissions for YGs 1998-2010

YG1999, as the Army realized an increase need for officers as a result of the Modular Design Initiative, the Army began relying on OCS to meet its commissioning requirements. “The Army increased total accessions from FY 2001 to FY 2005 by nearly doubling the number of officers commissioned through OCS.”³⁸ Further, as the Army’s force cap was increased and additional new officer requirements were generated, the reliance on OCS to meet these needs grew and the percentage of commissions through OCS grew to over 40% with YG2009. The reason the Army was forced to use OCS to meet the requirements during this period was primarily due to ROTC programs failing to produce enough new officers. USMA did fall below its goal of 900-1000 a few years, but in comparison, the number of new officers it failed to produce was minimal to the number of new officers produced through OCS. The short fall in ROTC programs was first a result of the Army not wanting to commit funding to increase their programs, thinking that this was a short term problem. Secondly, it would take several years to turn the ROTC program around. The Army, with YG2010, is starting to see an increased production of new officers from ROTC programs. This may indicate

that ROTC will continue to increase the number of new officers it produces and reduce the dependency on OCS. Assuming this is correct, this paper will focus on the increased use of OCS commissions from 1999 through 2009 and the effects that this will have on the senior leadership of the Army.

From 1999 through 2009, the Army utilized both OCS-IS and OCS-EO programs as part of its increased use of OCS commissions. The OCS-IS program pulls candidates from the Army's enlisted force who have already served five to ten years and the OCS-EO program selects candidates who are college graduates with no military training. The table below illustrates the total number of OCS commissions each year

Number and Percent of OCS Program Usage					
YG	OCS Total	OCS-EO		OCS-IS	
1998	409	44	10.8%	365	89.2%
1999	551	82	14.9%	469	85.1%
2000	636	140	22.0%	496	78.0%
2001	778	258	33.2%	520	66.8%
2002	1,001	401	40.1%	600	59.9%
2003	987	520	52.7%	467	47.3%
2004	812	426	52.5%	386	47.5%
2005	970	436	44.9%	534	55.1%
2006	1,339	695	51.9%	644	48.1%
2007	1,701	1015	59.7%	686	40.3%
2008	1,395	780	55.9%	615	44.1%
2009	2,437	1499	61.5%	938	38.5%
2010	2,127	1548	72.8%	579	27.2%

Table 2. Number and Percent of OCS Program Usage

and the number and percentage of the total that were commissioned from each of the OCS programs.³⁹ When initially increasing the use of OCS in 1999 through 2002, the Army significantly increased the use of the OCS-IS program, going from 365 graduates to 600. The significance of these numbers is that each year these are the number of noncommissioned officers that were pulled from the enlisted leadership to transfer to

the officer corps. After 2003, the numbers fluctuated until 2009 where there was a surge of 938 officers produced through the OCS-IS program. The OCS-EO program saw a rapid increase in use after 1999 and has steadily increased, to where in 2009 the majority of OCS commissions came from this program. Due to pulling the candidates for these two programs from different sources, they create different impacts on the force.

Impacts of increasing OCS commissions

The increased use of OCS, both OCS-IS and OCS-EO programs, to meet Army officer manning requirements has and will continue to impact the manning of the Army. OCS was designed to be the Army's surge capability, to meet officer manning requirements where USMA and ROTC fell short. Historically, prior to 1999, OCS provided approximately 10% of the commissioned officers in each year. "By shifting almost 45 percent of ROTC's commissioning mission to OCS, the Army has forfeited its ability to rely upon OCS as a quick-turn source of additional officers in the event of a national crisis necessitating its rapid expansion."⁴⁰ OCS was used after the Vietnam War and prior to 1999 primarily as a surge capability to meet officer manning requirements that were not produced from West Point or ROTC. OCS from 1999 to 2009 became a primary source of meeting officer requirements for the Army. Although OCS is still capable of surging to produce higher percentages, the Army's current use of the program is not for a surge capability but as a key commissioning program to meet officer manning needs.

By increasing the number of officers that were commissioned through OCS, the Army was required to reduce the talent level of individuals accepted into the OCS

program. Through OCS-EO, the tremendous surge required that selection standards were lowered to meet the increased numbers accepted into the program, from 82 commissioned officers in YG1999 to 1499 commissioned officers in YG2009. For OCS-IS, “As the Army increases the number of OCS officers, it must reach deeper and deeper into its pool of sergeants to create new officers. As a result, the share of OCS candidates with a U.S. Army Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score below Category II has increased from 15 percent in 1997 to 35 percent in 2007. Therefore, an increasing share of OCS candidates below Category II means that officers with a reduced likelihood of academic or occupational success are being commissioned in greater numbers than before.”⁴¹ With lower quality being allowed to enter the force at significantly increased percentages of the force, this will have an overall effect of lowering the talent level of the Army’s junior officers.

Finally, for both programs, OCS has been used in the past to expand the officer corps as a result of the nation entering combat. “One might think that it is natural to expand OCS in a time of war, but two characteristics of OCS expansion after 1999 differentiate it from the past. The first is that a full third of this shift from ROTC to OCS occurred prior to OIF as a result of the Modular Force Initiative. Second, during previous OCS expansions, the bulk of its new officers served the critical purpose of providing excellent junior officer leadership to a draft army. At war’s end, the majority of them would accompany the conscripts they led back into the civilian workforce. Today, however, OCS officers receive a “Regular Army” commission and are placed upon the path to mid-career and senior leadership positions.”⁴² More specifically, from 1999 to 2009, OCS commissioned officers were produced to increase the number of mid-career

officers. In losing its surge capability, the Army has increased its number of less talented officers with the expectation they will become and serve as Majors in the U.S. Army.

The increased use of OCS-IS commissioned officers also will impact the operations of the Army. OCS-IS is the single most expensive source in terms of marginal cost to produce an officer. Unlike the individuals brought into West Point or ROTC from outside of the Army, the OCS officer is recruited from within it. Their commissioning robs the noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps of talent and immediately creates a hole in the Army's enlisted force that must be filled. Increasingly, OCS candidates are NCOs in whom the Army has invested years of training and education. Seasoned NCOs cannot be created overnight - replacing each one entails significant training and recruiting costs.⁴³ At the same time, the U.S. Army has increasingly drawn senior NCOs into OCS-IS. In 1997, only 15 percent of OCS-IS candidates had more than 10 years of enlisted service. By 2007 that percentage had tripled to 45 percent, and a full quarter of these were Sergeants First Class. This increasing reliance on senior NCOs also brings OCS into direct competition with the warrant officer corps and reduces the quality of warrant officers.⁴⁴

Continuation rates of OCS commissioned officers

Of all the impacts as a result of the increased use of OCS commissions, the continuation rate of OCS commissioned officers will have the biggest effect on the Army officer manning. The reason for increasing the OCS commissions was to meet the shortage of Captains and Majors in the force. Due to increased use of OCS commissions, it has already been shown that the Army accepted less talented

individuals into the officer corps to ensure that projected numbers of Captains and Majors would be filled. In addition to being less talented, projected continuation rates for OCS commissioned officers show that the use of OCS to meet manning requirements has increased the future shortage of Majors and now created a significant future shortage for selecting the Lieutenant Colonel population.

The below chart shows the percentage of initially commissioned officers by commissioning source that continue after each year of service.⁴⁵ The data shown in

Yearly Continuation Percentages by Source of Commission												
Years of Service	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
USMA	95%	92%	55%	45%	41%	38%	35%	35%	35%	35%	35%	35%
ROTC	92%	65%	55%	51%	47%	45%	41%	41%	40%	40%	39%	38%
OCS-IS	88%	85%	81%	78%	75%	74%	72%	62%	56%	50%	45%	40%
OCS-EO	65%	55%	51%	50%	49%	48%	48%	48%	46%	44%	42%	40%

Table 3. Continuation Percentages by Source of Commission

this chart was developed from the averages of continuation rates from YG1995 through YG2006. Although there are a few variances in specific areas of some YG's timelines, the overall percentages are consistent with the 12 years that were reviewed. Given these continuation rates and the number of officers commissioned for a specific YG, the 15 year projections can be determined for that YG. The below graph is an example for YG2009. For YG2009 that commissioned 5,863 officers from all four sources, 2,247

2009 Continuation Data												
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
USMA	931	902	539	441	402	372	343	343	343	343	343	343
ROTC	2250	1590	1345	1247	1150	1101	1003	1003	978	978	954	929
OCS-IS	825	797	760	732	704	694	675	582	525	469	422	375
OCS-EO	974	824	764	750	735	720	720	720	690	660	630	600
Total	4980	4113	3408	3170	2991	2887	2741	2648	2536	2450	2349	2247

Table 4. Continuation Data for YG 2009

officers will remain in service after serving 15 years. Of these 2,247, 343 will have received their commission from West Point, 929 from ROTC, 375 from OCS-IS and 600 from OCS-EO. By developing these same continuation numbers for YGs1998 through 2010, the below graph is developed showing officer strengths available by YG in each

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025				
YG1998	3794	2976	2362	2152	1992	1905	1758	1721	1670	1647	1599	1551	← Population to Select LTCs From															
YG1999		3676	2932	2325	2118	1965	1881	1743	1696	1640	1610	1559	1509															
YG2000			3868	3080	2454	2241	2080	1993	1848	1798	1738	1706	1651	1596														
YG2001				3914	3123	2504	2292	2132	2044	1901	1849	1785	1749	1691	1633													
YG2002					3918	3174	2545	2332	2175	2088	1951	1891	1822	1778	1716	1653												
YG2003						3963	3161	2550	2342	2184	2097	1957	1910	1845	1807	1747	1687											
YG2004							3938	3133	2499	2287	2127	2039	1897	1858	1800	1768	1713	1659										
YG2005								3977	3189	2567	2355	2195	2107	1966	1913	1846	1806	1744	1683									
YG2006									3749	3070	2493	2298	2154	2074	1952	1887	1814	1761	1694	1627								
YG2007										4425	3619	2946	2720	2554	2459	2318	2250	2164	2103	2024	1945							
YG2008											4226	3435	2779	2558	2395	2303	2163	2102	2025	1972	1901	1830						
YG2009												4980	4113	3408	3170	2991	2887	2741	2648	2536	2450	2349	2247					
YG2010													4951	4011	3295	3056	2875	2770	2620	2562	2469	2403	2316	2228				

Table 5. Available Officer Strengths by YG

of the respective years of service. The areas shaded in gray are numbers of Captains and the areas shaded in black are numbers of Majors. The last block in each YG row reflects the number of Majors available at the time of the Lieutenant Colonels selection board. An example, for YG1998 there will be 1,551 Majors considered for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in FY2013, their 15th year of service. They will be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in their 16th year of service.⁴⁶ Continuation rates after 15 years of service slightly decline, but the majority of individuals who serve to 15 years will continue to serve for 20 years, with the exception of the OCS-IS commissioned officers.

The continuation rate for OCS-EO commissioned officers initially makes a dramatic drop, but by year 15 are similar to continuation rates for ROTC commissioned officers. OCS-EO officers are required to serve three years following commissioning. After completing these three years, a large portion departs the service and by their fifth year of service, only 55% are remaining. The impact of so many departing the force after five years of service negatively impacts the Captains' population and possibly creates a shortage during this time frame. By the tenth year of service, continuation

rates slightly exceed continuation rates of USMA and ROTC, so they provide similar percentages for selection to Major.

Continuation rates for OCS-IS commissioned officers are considerably different from all other three sources of commissions. OCS-IS candidates are selected from the noncommissioned officer corps, with most candidates having served seven to ten years before attending OCS. Already having a substantial commitment of service to the U.S. Army prior to going to OCS, the majority of the OCS-IS commissioned officers would serve the additional 10-13 years to become retirement eligible. 72% of OCS-IS officers serve 10 years. Many of the OCS officers will be eligible for retirement just after reaching the rank of major.⁴⁷ Since so many OCS-IS officers stay to be promoted to the rank of Major, the Army's use of this commissioning source significantly contributed to the retention of Captains and initially the numbers of Majors available to the force. After being promoted to Major, over 20% of the original commissioned OCS-IS officers will leave the force. In the case of YG2009, this means that approximately 300 Majors will retire between 2019 and 2024. This will impact the number of senior Majors available to the force and severely impact the number of Majors that are available for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. The extensive use of OCS-IS as a commissioning source did help in correcting the immediate problem of meeting requirements for Captains and Majors. With the required number of Majors in the force, the Army could assume that it will have the required population to select its Lieutenant Colonels from. Due to the significant predicted departure of OCS-IS Majors retiring, that population of Majors will be severely limited to select future Lieutenant Colonels from and possibly decrease the talent of the Colonels that will follow.

A shortage of talent in future Lieutenant Colonels

In 2014, the Army will experience extraordinarily high promotion rates to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Part of this is due to the carry over in short fall of Captains and Majors that was experienced starting in 2002. The situation has been compounded by the increased use of OCS-IS as a commissioning source with YG1999. Individuals in YG1999 will have their selection board for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 2014. Two assumptions must be made to demonstrate this high selection rate. First, the requirements for Lieutenant Colonels will not change in the future and second, that the Army will continue to select the same number of individuals for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. For 2010, the Army selected 1,483 Majors for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.⁴⁸ Based on the continuation rates previously discussed, in 2014 there will 1,509 Majors available for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. If 1,483 individuals are selected from this population of Majors, the selection rate would be 98%. This is extremely high compared to the DOPMA recommended promotion rate of 70%.⁴⁹ Current promotion rates have already raised some concerns regarding the quality of the officers being selected for promotion. Some analysts would argue that these unusually high promotion rates, combined with wartime strains and the emphasis on manning the modular units, may have diluted the overall quality of the Army officer corps.⁵⁰ The most critical aspect of these potential shortages is that they will not be equally spread over the branches and some branches could experience shortages greater than 50 percent.⁵¹ The promotion selection rates will steadily decline through 2021, with YG2008 having a promotion rate to Lieutenant Colonel of 91%. In 2022, the promotion rate goes to 76% and in 2023 the promotion rate is back under the DOPMA

standard at 64%. The concerned area is with YGs 1999 through 2008 with over 91% of these individuals being selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. “The concern is that the Army is mortgaging its future.”⁵²

The Army will not be able to select the same talent level for its Lieutenant Colonel population with promotion rates ranging from 91% to 98%. In 2007, “the Army promoted over 90 percent of eligible officers to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Major. As a result, officers whom the Army previously might not have promoted are increasingly assuming positions of responsibility to which they may be unequal.”⁵³ In the situation of YG1999, whose selection board for Lieutenant Colonel is in 2014, the expected promotion selection rate to Lieutenant Colonel of 98% exceeds the DOPMA standard by 28%. Out of the 1,483 Majors that will be selected out of this YG in 2014, approximately 400 could be individuals who would have not been selected if the DOPMA average selection rate had been maintained. Ultimately, 28% of the Lieutenant Colonels selected in YG1999 would not meet the same talent level as seen in previous YGs. With this same situation continuing through YGs 2000 through 2008, almost 25% of the total Lieutenant Colonel population will be substandard. As discussed previously, the increased use of OCS as a commissioning source in these same YGs, decreased the talent that was initially being brought into the Army, which compounds the problem even further. Starting in 2015, the Army will see a decrease in the talent of its Lieutenant Colonel level operations. This talent level will have a significantly negative impact on the Army from 2020 to 2023. In 2024, the talent level will begin to rise and be back to normal levels by 2027, based on this model.

Impact on future Colonels

Ultimately, the reduced talent level at the Lieutenant Colonel level will be transferred to the Army's senior leaders, as the YGs 1999 through 2008 are promoted to the rank of Colonel. Based on 20% to 25% of a YG being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel that in previous years would not have been promoted, these individuals should not even be considered in the population for selection to Colonel with their YG. In the case of YG2009 officers, 1,483 were selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. 415 of these individuals, 28%, would not have been previously selected with their YG. There were projected to be 188 OCS-IS commissioned officers promoted to Lieutenant Colonel with this YG and due to retirement, many of them would not be available for promotion to Colonel. This leaves a population of 880 Lieutenant Colonels to select the 415 Colonels without even considering the retirement attrition of Lieutenant Colonels. Without the attrition being considered, the selection rate to Colonel would be below the DOPMA standard of 50%. Considering the attrition due to the retirement of Lieutenant Colonels would decrease the available population for consideration and cause the DOPMA standard of 50% to be exceeded. Ultimately, there are too many factors and possibilities to determine how much of an effect the reduced talent level of the Lieutenant Colonels' population will have on the Colonels' population. There is a possibility though that due to the increased use of OCS commissions, the talent level of the Colonels population for YGs 1999 through 2006 will be lower than seen in previous years. Any reduced talent at this level will have a tremendous impact on the operations of the Army and the development of junior leaders that these Colonels lead.

The officers that the Army accessed are the feedstock for its senior leaders in the following 30 years. Because of this, the Army must evaluate each new officer not just for his or her potential as a Lieutenant, but as a Colonel or a General as well. This is why the U.S. Army cannot accept risk in its Officer Corps – the consequences affect generations of officers and are enduring. By accessing and promoting lower talent today, the Army pays a price in less competent officer leadership tomorrow, a problem that takes years to rectify.⁵⁴

Recommended solution

The situation that was presented in this paper assumed that current conditions of the Army will continue into the future, but this is not a valid assumption. Between 2011 and 2023, the force structure of the Army will change. Secretary Gates, the current Secretary of Defense, has already announced that the Army will draw down its numbers as forces are pulled out of Iraq and Afghanistan. A reduction in force numbers would decrease the required number of Lieutenant Colonels, which would decrease selection rates for promotion and ensure only higher talented individuals are advanced. These reductions are scheduled to start in three to four years, which will be after Secretary Gates departs his position and possibly with a new presidential administration in place. With changes in leadership, the scheduled reduction in force structure could also change. Additionally, with the current unrest in the world today, no one can predict what the demands on the military will be in three to four years. The Army could be required to increase its force strength, which would increase the requirement for Lieutenant Colonels and increase the affects of the problem described in this paper. Undoubtedly,

the force strength of the Army will change in the future. Today's assumption is that it will decline, but unforeseeable situations could cause an increase.

A fact that is known, whether there is an increase or decrease in force strength, is that all the individuals who will be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in years 2015 through 2023 are already serving in the Army. Due to the long term development to produce a Lieutenant Colonel and no lateral entry options, the population to select the future Lieutenant Colonels from has already been determined. Whatever talent level was accessed into the force for the YGs 1999 through 2009 is the talent level that will ultimately be developed and promoted into the future Lieutenant Colonels. Due to an unknown future, the best case for preparing for the future of the Army is to assume no change in force strength and that historical attrition rates will continue causing selection rates for promotions through Lieutenant Colonel to be above 95%. By focusing on the officers currently serving in YGs 1999 through 2009, there is time to increase the overall talent of these individuals so that during periods of high selection rates to Lieutenant Colonel, quality officers are in the right positions with the needed development and there will be an exceptional population to select the future Colonels.

The best solution for the Army is to transition to a talent based management system for its officers. The Army's current officer management system was designed to facilitate personnel accounting concerned with balancing personnel assets against unit requirements as one would balance assets and liabilities in an accounting ledger. However, these systems do not collect, organize or present the types of information necessary to manage talent. The Army must seek ways to move beyond personnel accounting and into talent management.⁵⁵

Today's assignment managers can access little to no information related to the competency or abilities of the officers that they are responsible for managing.⁵⁶ Modern information technology must be utilized to the fullest extent. Assignment managers must be given a system and the tools to effectively manage officer's careers. This is extremely important for the junior officers entering the force who do not have the knowledge or experience to understand how they can best be utilized throughout the Army. By moving towards a talent management system, the right officers can be identified for the right jobs, allowing them to excel in environments that are best suited for their comparative advantages, attributes, competencies and abilities. Eventually, a talent management system will position the Army to compete with the civilian market for officer talent. It will translate directly into better officer development and retention through increased job satisfaction.

With a talent based system in place or developing in the Army, leaders can focus on increasing the capabilities of officers when they are placed on the right career paths and in the right jobs for their aptitudes. "Talent goes beyond attitude or desire, beyond will and skill, beyond tolerance, compassion, values and character. Talent adds the critical dimensions of intelligence, of aptitudes for rapid learning and adaptation. Talented officers have powers of reasoning to quickly discern patterns of activity within new situations, and conceive alternatives to address situations for which they have never been specifically trained. Talented officers leverage these innate aptitudes to become experts in the competencies to which they are drawn."⁵⁷ Overall, implementing a talent based system that instills these values would increase the capabilities and efficiencies of the officers in YGs 1999 through 2009.

The Army must find ways to develop these attributes of talent into all officers, but most importantly into the officers of YGs 1999 through 2009. These officers must be treated as the professionals of the Army's future and make them stakeholders now. This development should be accomplished primarily through additional civil schooling, training with industry, mentorship and peer relationships, operational assignments and upgrades to the U.S. Army's Officer Education System.⁵⁸ By focusing on the development of these officers as professionals early in their careers, the Army will raise the talent level and place officers in positions that allow for increased performance. Ultimately, when these YGs reach 15 years of service, they will be thoroughly prepared to take on the responsibilities of Lieutenant Colonels in the U.S. Army and thereby reducing the effects of less talent created by increased promotion selection rates.

Conclusion

This paper identified a possible future loss of talent at the Lieutenant Colonel level for Year Groups 1999 through 2009 and possibly how this loss of talent could be carried over into the Colonels rank of these same officers. The evidence provided in this paper would indicate that as history has developed over the past 20 years, there is a strong possibility that in some degree, the U.S. Army will experience this predicted problem in the next 15 years. Due to an unknown future, including U.S. job market, demands of the military and the size of the force that will be maintained, the degree to which this issue will be seen is unknown. If the force were reduced significantly, there may be little to no evidence of a problem. If future demands of the military were significantly increased causing an increased force manning, the future senior leadership of the U.S. Army will be in jeopardy. It is highly probable that the experience will land

somewhere in between. Due to the length of time it takes to develop officers within the Army's system, it is imperative that a desirable solution be implemented as soon as possible. The talent based management system proposed as part of this thesis would be good resolution and ensure that today's junior officers are prepared for their future challenges as senior leaders. If the Army decides to taken no action as a result of this potential future problem, and this issue was to manifest, the Army would find itself in 2020 in a position where it is incapable of reacting, and thus resolving it to live through whatever outcome will happen. By having an operational procedure in place to prevent the degradation of future Lieutenant Colonel talent would at a minimum give some capability to adjust depending on the severity. Therefore, this paper argues that with even the slightest possibility of this issue developing, the Army would be best served to address and implement procedures to prepare.

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