



Highlights of [GAO-03-1005](#), a report to the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) must convince more than 200,000 people each year to join the military. To assist in recruiting, the military services advertise on television, on radio, and in print and participate in other promotional activities. In the late 1990s, some of the services missed their overall recruiting goals. In response, DOD added recruiting resources by increasing its advertising, number of recruiters, and financial incentives. By fiscal year 2003, DOD's total recruiting budget was approaching \$4 billion annually.

At the request of Congress, GAO determined the changes in DOD's advertising programs and funding trends since the late 1990s and assessed the adequacy of measures used by DOD to evaluate the effectiveness of its advertising.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD set clear, measurable advertising objectives; develop outcome measures to evaluate advertising programs' performance; and use these measures to monitor advertising's performance and make choices on recruiting investments.

In its comments on this report, DOD concurred with the recommendations and stated that it will develop a DOD advertising strategic framework to provide overall direction.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1005](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1005).

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

# MILITARY RECRUITING

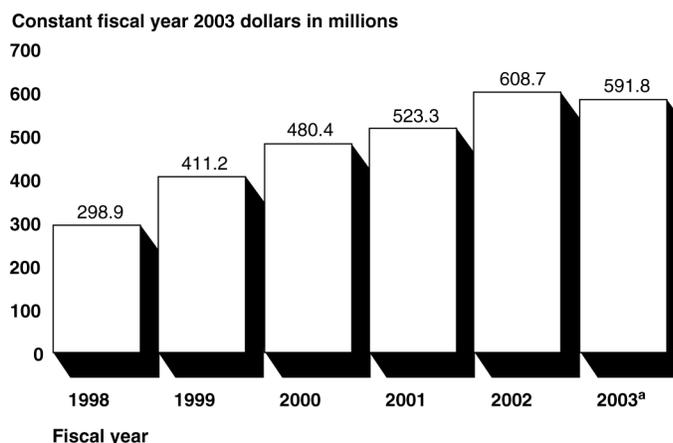
## DOD Needs to Establish Objectives and Measures to Better Evaluate Advertising's Effectiveness

### What GAO Found

Since the late 1990s, DOD has revamped its recruiting advertising programs and nearly doubled the funding for recruiting advertising. The military services have revised many of their advertising campaigns and focused on complementing traditional advertising, such as by increasing the use of the Internet, and participating in more promotional activities, such as sports car racing events. DOD's total advertising funding increased 98 percent in constant dollars from fiscal year 1998 through fiscal year 2003—from \$299 million to \$592 million. The advertising cost per enlisted recruit has nearly tripled and is now almost \$1,900. The military services agree that the revised strategies and increased investments have energized their advertising campaigns and better positioned them to recruit in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Today, almost all of the active and reserve components are meeting their overall recruiting goals in terms of the quality and quantity of new recruits.

DOD does not have clear program objectives and adequate outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its advertising as part of its overall recruiting effort. Thus, DOD cannot show that its increased advertising efforts have been a key reason for its overall recruiting success. Isolating the impact of advertising on recruiting efforts is inherently difficult because joining the military is a profound life decision. Moreover, DOD has not consistently tracked key information, such as public awareness of military recruiting advertising and the willingness of young adults to join the military. Such data could be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of advertising. Without sufficient information on advertising's effectiveness, DOD cannot determine the return on its advertising funding or make fact-based choices on how its overall recruiting investments should be allocated.

**DOD's Total Recruiting Advertising Funding for Fiscal Years 1998 to 2003**



Source: DOD.

<sup>a</sup>In-year estimate.