

Why GAO Did This Study

Recruiters are often referred to as the “face” of the ARNG. In the past, there have been allegations of recruiter misconduct and misuse of financial incentives, making it important for recruiters to ensure procedures are followed when working with applicants and that incentives to join the ARNG are awarded properly and effectively.

House Report 113-446 included a provision for GAO to review the ARNG’s recruiting practices. This report evaluates the extent to which (1) ARNG has provided oversight of its recruiting process; (2) ARNG met its goals for recruiting, completion of initial military training, and initial term of service; and (3) OSD, Department of the Army, and ARNG have conducted oversight of ARNG’s enlistment financial incentives programs. For this work, GAO reviewed DOD and ARNG recruiting policy and procedures and interviewed cognizant officials. GAO analyzed data on recruiting from FY2010 through FY2014, training from FY2011 through FY2014, and initial term of service for FY2015. GAO visited four states representing a range of size and locations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that ARNG take actions to collect consistent, complete, and valid data on soldiers who do not complete training and initial term of service, and evaluate and document its incentives programs. DOD concurred with GAO’s recommendations but stated that it did not concur with the report due to GAO’s depiction of waivers. GAO disagrees with DOD’s characterization as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-16-36](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

MILITARY RECRUITING

Army National Guard Needs to Continue Monitoring, Collect Better Data, and Assess Incentives Programs

What GAO Found

The Army National Guard (ARNG) has taken steps to increase oversight of its recruiting process primarily conducted by recruiters dispersed at the state-level but has not established a permanent program to monitor state-level recruiting activities. In June 2014, the ARNG created a Recruiting Standards Branch that has started to conduct inspections of state offices. The Recruiting Standards branch completed inspections in 16 states from October 2014 through July 2015 and found that 2 states did not achieve full compliance in their inspections. However, this is not a permanent program, and ARNG officials stated that they are using positions to staff it intended for use in other areas. The ARNG is seeking approval for permanent staff by early 2017 to continue its oversight. Continued monitoring of state-level recruiting activities, such as through a permanent recruiting standards branch, will be important to ARNG’s oversight functions.

The ARNG had mixed results in meeting its overall recruiting goals and nearly met its goals for initial military training; however, the ARNG does not track whether soldiers are completing their initial term of service or military obligation. The ARNG met its recruiting goals in 2 of the 5 years from fiscal years (FY) 2010 through 2014. While the ARNG nearly met its goals for training completion from FY 2011 through 2014, GAO found that the ARNG does not have complete, consistent, and valid data on why soldiers do not complete training and when they separate during training. Without consistent, complete, and valid data, decision makers do not have information to determine why a higher number of soldiers are not completing training. The ARNG also does not track whether soldiers are completing their initial term of service. GAO’s analysis shows that about 40 percent of enlisted soldiers who joined the ARNG from FY 2001 through 2007 did not complete their initial term of service. Without tracking completion of initial term of service, ARNG officials cannot assess whether their programs are effective in meeting personnel requirements and do not have visibility to ensure the ARNG is maximizing its investment in its soldiers.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Department of the Army (Army), and ARNG have not fully conducted their oversight responsibilities of ARNG enlistment financial-incentives programs. OSD has not enforced a requirement that ARNG report incentives obligated through the ARNG incentives programs. Further, although Army and National Guard regulations require evaluations of the effectiveness of the ARNG financial incentives programs, the Army and ARNG have not evaluated and documented the effectiveness of the programs. Without evaluating and documenting the effectiveness of ARNG incentives programs, officials may not know whether changes are needed for effective use of incentives or they may determine that certain financial incentives are not needed. Moreover, the ARNG has not ensured that recruiters have an understanding of available financial incentives. Financial incentives are a tool available to recruiters and agency policy states that incentives are available to assist in meeting and sustaining readiness requirements and to assist in filling critical shortages. ARNG has not provided recruiters with training on using financial incentives. With additional training, recruiters could better understand when and how to offer financial incentives to fill critical positions.