



Highlights of [GAO-06-846](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

The viability of the All Volunteer Force depends, in large measure, on the Department of Defense's (DOD) ability to recruit several hundred thousand individuals each year. Since the involvement of U.S. military forces in Iraq in March 2003, several DOD components have been challenged in meeting their recruiting goals. In fiscal year 2005 alone, three of the eight active and reserve components missed their goals. Some recruiters, reportedly, have resorted to overly aggressive tactics, which can adversely affect DOD's ability to recruit and erode public confidence in the recruiting process. GAO was asked to address the extent to which DOD and the services have visibility over recruiter irregularities; what factors may contribute to recruiter irregularities; and what procedures are in place to address them. GAO performed its work primarily at the service recruiting commands and DOD's Military Entrance Processing Command; examined recruiting policies, regulations, and directives; and analyzed service data on recruiter irregularities.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making several recommendations to improve DOD's visibility over recruiter irregularities and the services' ability to track and report allegations and incidents of irregularities. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred or partially concurred with four of GAO's five recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-846](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-846).

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 and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility over Recruiter Irregularities

### What GAO Found

DOD and the services have limited visibility to determine the extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring. DOD, for example, has not established an oversight framework that includes guidance requiring the services to maintain and report data on recruiter irregularities and criteria for characterizing irregularities and establishing common terminology. The absence of guidance and criteria makes it difficult to compare and analyze data across services and limit's DOD's ability to determine when corrective action is needed. Effective federal managers continually assess and evaluate their programs to provide accountability and assurance that program objectives are being achieved. Additionally, the services do not track all allegations of recruiter wrongdoing. Accordingly, service data likely underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities. Nevertheless, available service data show that between fiscal years 2004 and 2005, allegations and service-identified incidents of recruiter wrongdoing increased, collectively, from 4,400 cases to 6,600 cases; substantiated cases increased from just over 400 to almost 630 cases; and criminal violations more than doubled from just over 30 to almost 70 cases. The department, however, is not in a sound position to assure Congress and the general public that it knows the full extent to which recruiter irregularities are occurring.

A number of factors within the recruiting environment may contribute to irregularities. Service recruiting officials stated that the economy has been the most important factor affecting recruiting success. Almost three-quarters of active duty recruiters responding to DOD's internal survey also believed that ongoing hostilities in Iraq made it hard to achieve their goals. These factors, in addition to the typical challenges of the job, such as demanding work hours and pressure to meet monthly goals, may lead to recruiter irregularities. The recruiters' performance evaluation and reward systems are generally based on the number of contracts they write for applicants to enter the military. The Marine Corps is the only service that uses basic training attrition rates as a key component of the recruiter's evaluation. GAO previously recommended that the services link recruiter awards and incentives more closely to applicants' successful completion of basic training. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendation, but has not made this a requirement across the services.

The services have standard procedures in place, provided in the Uniform Code of Military Justice and service regulations, to investigate allegations of recruiter irregularities and to prosecute and discipline recruiters found guilty of violating recruiting policies and procedures. In addition, to help recruiters better understand the nature and consequences of committing irregularities in the recruitment process, all services use available information on recruiter wrongdoing to update their training.