



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL  
JOHN McHUGH, NEW YORK  
CHAIRMAN**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Statement of Chairman John M. McHugh**

*Hearing on the Current Status of Military Recruiting and Retention*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today the subcommittee turns its attention to the two building blocks of our military forces – recruiting and retention.

This panel has attempted to closely monitor recruiting and retention trends to be certain that Congress does not overlook even the most subtle signal that further legislative action or Congressional oversight may be required. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that military recruiters have the tools and resources needed to be successful.

While the statement, “failure is not an option,” is probably overused by all of us in describing important objectives, it seems to me to be the precise circumstance in which we currently find ourselves regarding military recruiting and retention. It is imperative to national security that we continue to recruit and retain the very best that America has to offer.

It should be no secret that I believe the Army – and by that I mean the active, guard, and reserve – is simply too small to successfully perform all that our nation is asking it to do. That is why I am particularly concerned by any evidence that suggests that even the current authorized end strength of the Army cannot be attained because of a failure to successfully recruit sufficient candidates for the military.

If there be any, close observers of the subcommittee know that we have had long standing concerns about recruiting and retention. For example, much of the March 16th military personnel overview hearing focused on these very issues. At that time, we observed disturbing trends spanning the 2004 fiscal year, but the verdict was not yet in on 2005.

We now have a much clearer picture of fiscal year 2005 and, unfortunately, we know that there are serious manpower challenges, particularly in recruiting numbers. For example, it now seems unlikely that the Army will achieve its goal to access 80,000 new troops, missing that number by as many as 7,000 troops. Among the reserve components, we may well see four of the six components suffer a failed recruiting year, with the Army National Guard achieving less than 80 percent of its objective; thus failing for the third consecutive year. While we will likely hear positive comments about retention today, predictions of a looming retention crisis continue to feed the Washington rumor mill and are hard to refute as the operations tempo continues to grind the force.

Just this past week, the RAND Corporation released a report with a press release entitled, “RAND Study Warns that Military Actions in Iraq and Afghanistan have stretched the U.S Army Thin,” precisely mirroring our deepest concerns. The need to sound the alarm this year may be greater than at any time in recent memory. While recruiting and retention is never easy, the reemergence of the civilian job market and the

stresses of wartime operations on the force may well forge an environment over the next several years that will be the least favorable of the past 20 years.

I have heard much discussion in recent weeks about the need for our nation's leadership both to speak out about the nobility of service in our nation's military and to reach out to those people who influence the decisions of our youth. For the record, I am in complete agreement with that objective as recently articulated by the President in his speech at Fort Bragg.

But I must also caution that one of the hard lessons this subcommittee has learned is that the military must also be competitive in the marketplace. We must be prepared to offer the programs, and I dare say the cash, to attract quality people to serve.

We have included a number of initiatives to support recruiting and retention in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Bill, as well as \$462.7 million in additional funding. As good as I believe that package is, I suspect that more still needs to be done. That is why we are here today – to get the perspective of our military leaders from the active and the reserve components as to what more is needed to place recruiting and retention back on a level course.

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