



IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

A Breaking Military *Overextension Threatens Readiness* January 2008

Over 1.5 million American service members have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most military experts now agree that years of war and the spring 2007 “surge” have pushed our military to the breaking point. According to General George Casey, the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, “The demand for our forces exceeds the sustainable supply.”¹

The consequences of our overextension are dire. General Peter Pace, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, believes that there is a significant risk that the U.S. military would not be able to respond effectively if confronted by another crisis.²

- **There have been serious issues with recruitment and retention.**
 - Despite investing more than \$4 billion annually in recruitment,³ the Army and Marines have encountered serious difficulties getting enough people to enlist. Although recruitment figures have improved, the Army started the FY2008 recruiting year dramatically behind schedule.⁴
 - Retention costs have sky-rocketed to over \$1 billion, six times the amount spent in 2003.⁵
 - As the Iraq war drags on, the military has seen an exodus of qualified junior and midlevel officers. Middle enlisted ranks are suffering similar shortfalls; in the first quarter of 2007, the re-enlistment rate of mid-grade enlisted soldiers dropped 12 percent.

- **The military has responded to serious problems with recruitment by lowering age, education, and aptitude standards for new recruits and by increasing enlistment bonuses.**
 - In 2006, only 81% of enlistees had a regular high-school diploma.⁶
 - The maximum age for a new recruit has been raised from 35 to 42.⁷
 - The maximum acceptance of low-scoring troops on the enlistee aptitude test was increased from 2 to 4 percent in 2006. In 2006, 3.8 percent of first-time recruits had low scores.⁸
 - From 2004 to 2005, the number of recruits issued waivers for having committed ‘serious criminal misconduct’ rose by more than 54 percent.⁹ The number of waivers continued to rise in 2006, reaching 8,129.¹⁰ In 2007, the percentage of recruits receiving waivers increased to 12 percent, from 10 percent last year.¹¹
 - The Army’s expenditures for enlistment bonuses for active-duty, National Guard and Reserve troops have more than doubled from 2000 to 2005.¹²

- **The military has also relied on multiple, extended combat tours and a ‘Backdoor Draft’ to fulfill their manpower needs.**



- At least 449,000 troops have deployed more than once,¹³ and many have returned to war with only a few months' rest.
 - In the Army alone, 20 combat brigades have served two tours in Iraq, 9 have served three, and two have served four tours.¹⁴ 20,000 service members have been deployed at least five times.¹⁵
 - The military has also held 70,000 troops on active-duty beyond their expected contract end-dates, relying on a controversial policy known as "Stop Loss."¹⁶ Currently, 8,000 troops are still being held on Stop Loss orders.¹⁷
 - The military has also called up more than 10,000 veterans from the IRR, and relied on "cross-leveling" to help units meet personnel requirements for deployment.
- **The overuse of the National Guard and Reserves poses a serious threat to national security.**
 - The reserve component makes up a major part of our force in Iraq—at times, as much as much as 40% of the force in theatre.¹⁸
 - One-third of the Louisiana and Mississippi National Guard were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan when Hurricane Katrina hit.
 - According to the chief of the National Guard, Lt. General Blum, the reserve component is facing its worst state of readiness in 35 years.¹⁹
- **Equipment shortages have contributed to the plummeting readiness ratings of Army and Marine units and threaten our ability to cope with foreign threats and domestic emergencies.**
 - The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have "consumed 40 percent"²⁰ of the Army and Marines' total gear, and much of the military's equipment is in need of repair.²¹
 - As of September 2006, about 50% of all Army units have received the lowest possible readiness rating. About four-fifths of Army Guard and Reserve units not mobilized received the lowest possible readiness ratings.²²
 - The Army has already received over \$38 billion to repair or replace equipment used in Iraq and Afghanistan, and is asking for another \$13 billion a year until the conflicts wind down.²³
 - Equipment shortages have severely undercut military training, and hindered the response to national disasters. According to some military experts, 90 percent of National Guard units are not ready to respond to a domestic crisis.²⁴



For media inquiries:

Michael Houston
Communications Associate
(212) 982-9699
media@iava.org

Contact:

Vanessa Williamson
Policy Director
(202) 682-3490
vanessa@iava.org

¹ Lolita C. Baldor, "Army Too Stretched If Iraq Buildup Lasts," *Associated Press*, August 19, 2007: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=3498778>.

² Lawrence J. Korb, "Testimony before the United States House of Representatives Armed Services Committee," July 27, 2007, p. 2: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/07/pdf/Korb_Testimony.pdf.

³ "Military Recruiting 2006," National Priorities Project, December 22, 2006:

http://nationalpriorities.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=263&Itemid=61

⁴ Typically, the Army aims to have about 25 percent of a year's new recruits already in the enlistment process at the beginning of each fiscal year. At the end of FY 2004, only 18.4 percent of the next year's recruits were in that process. In 2008, the Army had a record-low 9 percent of its year-goal already signed up. Ann Scott Tyson, "Army Having Difficulty Meeting Goals in Recruiting," *The Washington Post*, February 21, 2005: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wpdyn/A40469-2005Feb20?language=printer>.

Robert Burns, "Record low level of enlistees on the books," *Associated Press*, November 1, 2007: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=3802880>.

⁵ "Military re-enlistment bonuses skyrocket," *Associated Press*, April 11, 2007:

http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/04/11/military.recruiting.ap/index.html?eref=rss_us

⁶ Will Dunham, "Pentagon defends quality of U.S. military recruits," *Reuters*, October 10, 2006:

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N10358112.htm>.

⁷ Thom Shankar, "Army and Other Ground Forces Meet '06 Recruiting Goals," *The New York Times*, October 10, 2006:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/10/us/10recruit.html?ex=1318132800&en=e88e396784abefce&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>.

⁸ "Lower standards help Army meet recruiting goal," *Associated Press*, October 9, 2006:

http://usatoday.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=USATODAY.com+-Lower+standards+help+Army+meet+recruiting+goal&expire=&urlID=19761899&fb=Y&url=httppercent3Apercent2Fwww.usatoday.compercent2Fnewspercent2Fwashingtonpercent2F2006-10-09-army-recruiting_x.htm&partnerID=1660.

⁹ Nick Turse, "U.S. is recruiting misfits for army," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 1, 2006:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2006/10/01/ING42LCIGK1.DTL>

¹⁰ Mark Thompson, "America's Broken Down Army," *TIME*, April 5, 2007:

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1606888,00.html>.

¹¹ Lawrence J. Korb, "Testimony Before the United States House of Representatives Armed Services Committee," July 27, 2007, p.12: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/07/pdf/Korb_Testimony.pdf.

¹² Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, "Second Report to Congress," March 1, 2007, p. 29:

<http://www.cngr.gov/Worddocs/Marchpercent201percent20Report/CNGRpercent20Secondpercent20Reportpercent20toppercent20Congresspercent20.pdf>.

¹³ Lawrence Korb, Peter Rundlet, Max Bergmann, et al. "Beyond the Call of Duty," *Center for American Progress*, March 6, 2007. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/03/readiness_report.html

¹⁴ Lawrence Korb, Peter Rundlet, Max Bergmann, et al. "Beyond the Call of Duty," *Center for American Progress*, March 6, 2007. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/03/readiness_report.html



¹⁵ Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health, “An achievable vision: Report of the Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health,” June 2007, p. 5: <http://www.ha.osd.mil/dhb/mhtf/MHTF-Report-Final.pdf>. Lawrence Korb et al., “Beyond the Call of Duty,” Center for American Progress, March 6, 2007, p. 6: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/03/readiness_report.html.

¹⁶ Lawrence Korb et al., “Beyond the Call of Duty,” Center for American Progress, March 6, 2007, p. 3: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/03/readiness_report.html.

¹⁷ American Psychological Association, “The Psychological Needs of U.S. Military Service Members and Their Families: A Preliminary Report,” February 2007, p. 9: <http://www.apa.org/releases/MilitaryDeploymentTaskForceReport.pdf>.

¹⁸ Lolita C. Baldor, “National Guard, Reserve role to be cut in Afghanistan, Iraq,” *Associated Press*, February 8, 2006: http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2006/02/08/national_guard_reserve_role_to_be_cut_in_afghanistan_iraq/

¹⁹ Lawrence J. Korb and Sean E. Duggan, “Caught Off Guard: The Link Between Our National Security and Our National Guard,” *Stars and Stripes*, Center for American Progress, May 21, 2007, p. 4: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/05/national_guard.html.

²⁰ Ann Scott Tyson, *Washington Post*, “Military is Ill-Prepared for Other Conflicts,” March 19, 2007: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/18/AR2007031801534.html>

²¹ Reps. Murtha and Obey, “United States Army Military Readiness,” September 13, 2006: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/pa12_murtha/PRmilreadiness0913.html

²² Reps. Murtha and Obey, “United States Army Military Readiness,” September 13, 2006: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2006_rpt/060913-murtha-obey_armyreadiness.htm.

²³ According to the Congressional Budget Office, at least 40 percent of the funds received have been used for other purposes. CBO also claims they cannot determine based on the Army’s own figures, why purported reset costs are rising so rapidly. Congressional Budget Office, “Replacing and Repairing Equipment Used in Iraq and Afghanistan: The Army’s Reset Program,” September 2007: <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/86xx/doc8629/09-13-ArmyReset.pdf>.

²⁴ Lawrence J. Korb and Sean E. Duggan, “Caught Off Guard: The Link Between Our National Security and Our National Guard,” Center for American Progress, May 21, 2007, p. 6: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/05/national_guard.html.