

Opening Remarks (As Prepared)
Ranking Member Andy Kim
Military Personnel Subcommittee Hearing
“Military Department Personnel Chiefs: Personnel Posture”

March 29, 2023

A few weeks ago, we heard testimony from your Services’ Senior Enlisted Leaders. They shared with us their concerns about recruiting and retaining the force. They also provided us with a snapshot of quality-of-life issues impacting military families.

Today I look forward to learning how your Services’ personnel policies support our military’s greatest asset – its people. Without Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Guardians, we couldn’t man military weapons systems, deliver humanitarian assistance around the globe, or effectively respond to aggression throughout the world.”

I read your testimonies and there is no doubt – you are all concerned about:

- Our youth’s decreasing propensity to serve,
- Their missing connection to the value of military service, and
- Meeting your end-strength goals.

I share these concerns and would add that is why I support taking whatever steps necessary to widen the pool of applicants we can draw from for our all-volunteer force.

It’s also very clear that you are each exploring new ways to attract talent for your specific service and mission needs without impacting the quality of individuals we bring into the force.

I’m encouraged by how you are employing innovative tools to increase the impact and effectiveness of your recruiter force – who often serve as first line ambassadors in schools and communities across the country.

I know we recruit the servicemember, but we retain their family. It’s important not to lose sight of the importance quality-of-life has in reaching end-strength goals.

I often hear from many service members in my district at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst how they struggle to get access to the medical care and child support they need. Additionally, and I think this is something my colleagues on the other side of the aisle can agree to, we need to address the lack of accessible mental health care across the force. This lack of care is impacting our ability to retain service members who we have a vested interest in helping return to full duty. We need to work together to solve this problem.

From my time in national security, I remember that to take a comprehensive look at a problem, in this case recruiting and retention, we needed diverse experiences and opinions. We may need to take a hard look, beyond the Department, at how we can best encourage the next generation to serve.

As I've said before, we ask a lot of our service members. We ask them to risk their lives to protect our country, so we need to make sure they know we have their backs and that we are supporting them however they need.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for having this hearing today so we can discuss the importance of personnel policies on the lives of servicemembers.

Thank you to the witnesses again for being here and I yield the balance of my time.