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August 1999

# MILITARY PERSONNEL

## Perspectives of Surveyed Service Members in Retention Critical Specialties



G A O

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

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**United States General Accounting Office**  
**Washington, D.C. 20548**

**National Security and  
International Affairs Division**

B-281031

August 16, 1999

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici  
Chairman, Committee on the Budget  
United States Senate

The Honorable Ted Stevens  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable George R. Nethercutt, Jr.  
House of Representatives

Concern has been expressed within the Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD) regarding the ability to retain members of the Armed Forces and maintain an adequate level of overall quality of life. The percent of military personnel who were away from home due to military deployments or training in fiscal year 1998 increased by more than 60 percent from the percent deployed 10 years earlier, during the Cold War period. This increase in personnel tempo has occurred against the backdrop of a 34-percent decrease in the number of active duty military personnel between 1988 and 1998 and a 34-percent decrease in real defense outlays during the same period.

At your request, we are reviewing quality of life and retention in the military. One component of your request asked us to address how quality of life and retention varies among the military services and between ranks. As part of our review of this issue, from December 1998 through March 1999, we administered a survey on quality of life and retention to approximately 1,000 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps active duty military personnel at 5 military installations. Participants were selected from the population of individuals at the five military installations working in job specialties that DOD believed were experiencing retention problems. Given the basis for selection, the results may not be generally applicable to other personnel in these or other job occupations located at these or other installations.

DOD has traditionally defined quality of life broadly, including factors ranging from military pay to family support services. We adopted the broad definition to be as inclusive as possible. We did not examine the validity of

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DOD's definition of quality of life. We examined which of the quality of life factors that had been identified and could reasonably be articulated had an impact on decisions to stay or leave the military and how satisfied or dissatisfied the military personnel we surveyed were with that array of factors.

We briefed your staff on April 21, 1999, on the preliminary survey results. This report responds to your request for a report of that briefing. We discuss the following survey outcomes in this report: (1) overall intentions to stay or leave the military, (2) levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the military, (3) factors that affect dissatisfaction and intent to leave the military, and (4) factors that affect satisfaction and intentions to stay in the military. We plan to conduct a further analysis of these survey results and prepare a more detailed report later this year.<sup>1</sup> For example, we will examine the relationships that may exist between certain variables, such as time in service, marital status, and personnel tempo, and differences regarding satisfaction and career intentions.

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## Results in Brief

Overall, more than half of the approximately 1,000 officers and enlisted military personnel we surveyed said they were dissatisfied and intended to leave the military after their current obligation or term of enlistment was up.<sup>2</sup> Dissatisfaction and intentions to leave the military were more apparent among enlisted personnel than officers. On average, 52 percent of enlisted personnel surveyed said they were dissatisfied with the military, whereas 46 percent of officers were dissatisfied. Similarly, 62 percent of enlisted personnel surveyed said that they intend to leave the military after their current obligation is up, whereas 40 percent of officers said they intend to leave.

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<sup>1</sup>We have several ongoing reviews requested by the Congress that relate to military personnel issues, including an historical examination of military retention rates, an examination of issues related to pilot shortages, and an analysis of data from a broad DOD/GAO military personnel survey to be implemented later this year.

<sup>2</sup>We had outside experts, including retired senior military officers, academic and general content experts, and a former private industry executive, review our findings. They indicated that the results align with findings from some of their recent research efforts on broader samples of some service populations.

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No single factor appeared to account for these results; rather, many factors were sources of dissatisfaction and reasons to leave the military.<sup>3</sup> The majority of factors (62 percent) were associated with work circumstances such as the lack of equipment and materials to successfully complete the demands of daily job requirements, the undermanning of units, the frequency of deployments, and the lack of personal time for family. The nature of military compensation such as base military pay and retirement pay was also important, but these factors accounted for less than a quarter (23 percent) of all the factors military personnel were dissatisfied with. In addition, the nature of military benefits such as medical care for military dependents and access to medical care in retirement accounted for 15 percent of all the factors military personnel were dissatisfied with.

The quality of life factors that are top sources of satisfaction for military personnel were traditional Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) activities and services, such as fitness and sports activities, as well as commissaries and exchanges, and chaplain services. Military personnel support programs, including youth and adolescent programs and military family support services, were also sources of satisfaction for the officers and enlisted military personnel we surveyed. One factor associated with work circumstances that both officers and enlisted personnel were satisfied with was their immediate supervisors. Although there was relative uniformity among officers and enlisted personnel in terms of the factors they were satisfied with, officers were unique in conveying satisfaction with military values and lifestyle, sense of esprit de corps, and living in new locations.

The survey findings generally suggest that actions to address the retention of military personnel in retention critical specialties or to develop effective and reliable assessments of military quality of life, should place special attention on aspects of military servicemembers' work circumstances. Many of these aspects, including lack of equipment and parts to perform day-to-day job functions, inadequate personnel levels, and high deployment pace and demands, reduce morale and create barriers that make it difficult for servicemembers to spend time away from the job and maintain a satisfactory personal life. Improving pay and benefits is an important concern for military personnel, but there seems to be a much greater need

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<sup>3</sup>Our review of comparable survey data obtained from a recent and broad-based Army personnel survey indicated similarities in findings concerning dissatisfaction with the amount of personnel available to do work, the amount of time separated from family, retirement benefits, and the quality of family medical care.

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to address other quality of life issues in the retention of military personnel, including the nature of their work circumstances.

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## Background

In 1994, the Secretary of Defense proposed a 6-year plan to address military quality of life in response to senior military leaders' concerns regarding personnel tempo, compensation, health care, housing, and community support activities. The changing nature of DOD's mission, changes in deployment, a reduction-in-force structure, base closures and realignments, and smaller defense budgets had culminated to create concerns about military readiness and the ability to retain servicemembers. In November 1994, the Secretary added \$2.7 billion to the defense budget, over 6 years, to fund increases in allowances, barracks, family housing, and community support activities. Separately, a \$7.7 billion commitment was provided to fund military pay raises through fiscal year 1999.

The Secretary's 1994 quality of life initiative also chartered a Defense Science Board Task Force to study military housing, personnel tempo, and community and family services. The task force was not directed to study other elements of quality of life, including compensation and medical care, because these elements were being reviewed by other organizations. In October 1995, the task force reported and made recommendations to improve military quality of life. DOD officials indicate that improvements include (1) upgrading standards of living (housing) and enhancing unaccompanied housing; (2) providing better child care facilities, more child care spaces, and more funds for the family advocacy program and the new parent support program; (3) improving fitness facilities; and (4) establishing a standard measure of personnel tempo and setting personnel tempo goals. The officials also indicate that the fewest accomplishments have been made regarding changes in personnel tempo and privatization of military housing.

To support and implement the task force recommendations, an internal DOD Quality of Life Executive Committee was also chartered under DOD's 1994 quality of life initiative. This committee continues to meet to work quality of life issues in a forum, inviting leadership from all services.

Today, DOD identifies the following as its quality of life priorities: (1) funding raises in basic pay and improving the fairness and efficiency of other elements of compensation; (2) driving personnel tempo as low as possible without jeopardizing mission and readiness; (3) providing servicemembers and their families' safe, modern communities and housing;

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(4) making education opportunities a cornerstone of DOD's quality of life programs; (5) ensuring parity in quality of life programs across installations and services; and (6) building a solid communication line to servicemembers and their families so as to understand their perceptions on quality of life.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD provided written comments on a draft of this report (see app. IV). DOD stated it did not disagree with "the overall thrust" of our report. DOD said its efforts to improve overall quality of life is fairly well documented in our report and that the report reflects DOD's efforts to "Put People First." DOD stated that our survey validates its position that no single factor impacts individual retention decisions.

DOD agreed that the survey results may not be generally applicable to other personnel but expressed concern that several of the generalizations made from the survey could suggest that shortcomings exist DOD-wide in the general workforce climate. We did not, however, generalize the results of our survey. Our survey results reflect the views of approximately 1,000 military personnel in retention critical specialties. Given the basis for sample selection, we stated that the results may not be generally applicable.

DOD disagreed with the draft report's reference that few accomplishments have been made regarding changes in personnel tempo and privatization of military housing. We did not state that few accomplishments had been made. We stated that DOD officials indicate that the fewest accomplishments have been made regarding changes in personnel tempo and privatization of military housing. DOD officials told us that, in response to the 1995 Defense Science Board Task Force recommendations to improve military quality of life, some improvements had been made in the areas of housing, childcare, fitness facilities, and personnel tempo. However, they noted that the fewest accomplishments had been made in the areas of personnel tempo and the privatization of military housing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>We did not review DOD's progress on the Defense Science Board's quality of life recommendations. However, we previously reported on DOD's progress on the military privatization housing initiative in our report entitled, Military Housing: Privatization Off to a Slow Start and Continued Management Attention Needed (GAO/NSIAD-98-178, July 17, 1998).

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DOD stated that our definition of quality of life was expanded beyond the traditional DOD definition to issues that included spare parts and equipment and unit manning. We agree that there are quality of life factors in our survey, including one that pertains to the availability of needed, parts, and equipment and another concerning the level of unit manning that are not within DOD's traditional definition of quality of life. Our study approach began by adopting the definition of quality of life consistent with DOD's broad definition. However, in our efforts to be as inclusive as possible, as we note in our methodology description, we also obtained input from independent experts and active duty military personnel and we reviewed quality of life and general personnel surveys developed or used in academic settings, the private sector, and individual military services. The final instrument we used contained 44 military quality of life factors that were identified through this process and that could reasonably be articulated. DOD's most recently developed survey to assess attitudes and perceptions of military life, scheduled for implementation in October 1999, now also includes items to measure military personnel satisfaction with the availability of parts and equipment as well as the level of unit manning.

DOD expressed concern with our finding that actions to address the retention of military personnel in retention critical specialties or to develop effective and reliable assessments of military quality of life, should place special attention on aspects of military servicemembers' work circumstances. DOD stated this may infer that less attention needs to be paid to other areas of quality of life. DOD believes that a "holistic approach," as outlined in its overall quality of life strategy, is more conducive to achieving desired organizational outcomes. While we agree that obtaining information across a broad spectrum of quality of life issues is appropriate, priorities must be set given limited resources. Specifically, there is a need to target options to maximize the return on related investments.

We believe that our survey results provide relevant information on the quality of life factors that are most dissatisfying among a sample of military personnel in retention critical specialties and that this information has implications for the priorities in DOD's overall quality of life strategy. The views of approximately 1,000 military personnel converged to show that 62 percent of the quality of life factors they were most dissatisfied with were related to work circumstances, including the lack of equipment and materials to successfully complete the demands of daily job requirements, the undermanning of units, the frequency of deployments, and the lack of



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personal time for family.<sup>5</sup> Further, three of the top five most frequently selected reasons to leave the military were also related to military personnel's work circumstances, including the frequency of deployments, the lack of materials and equipment to successfully complete the demands of daily job requirements, and the undermanning of units.

DOD's quality of life strategy recognizes that "military personnel want good pay, educational opportunities, meaningful work, challenging off-duty opportunities, and good places to live." While we recognize this strategy and the themes it emphasizes, we believe that work circumstances are central to quality of life for the military personnel we surveyed and warrant attention. Our study highlights the relative distinction of work circumstances compared to other issues, including pay and benefits; in accounting for the majority of quality of life factors a sample of military personnel working in retention critical specialties were dissatisfied with and most frequently identified as reasons to leave the military. In addition, the results of both of DOD's most recent (1995;1998) Health Related Behaviors Surveys of military personnel have shown that being away from family and increases in workload, both related to work circumstances, were the two most frequently cited sources of causing "a great deal" or a "fairly large amount" of stress among military personnel.

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## Scope and Methodology

A total of 986 active duty military personnel completed the survey.<sup>6</sup> We administered the survey between December 1998 and March 1999 at the Army's Fort Drum, New York; the Navy's Norfolk Navy Base, Virginia; the Air Force's Langley Air Force Base, Virginia; and the Marine Corps' Camp Lejeune and New River Air Station, North Carolina. We administered the survey in person at the military installations in group sessions of 10 to 20 people typically over the course of 2 days or until all scheduled participants had completed the survey.<sup>7</sup> The survey was anonymous.

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<sup>5</sup>Of the 44 quality of life factors included in our survey, 41 percent were broadly related to work circumstances.

<sup>6</sup>A total of 739 enlisted military personnel, 210 commissioned officers and 34 warrant officers participated. Three participants did not indicate their paygrade/rank. Warrant officers are not included in the data reported.

<sup>7</sup>We also conducted focus groups with approximately 400 survey participants. We plan to discuss these results in our final report.

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Participants were selected from the population of individuals at five military installations working in occupational specialties that were among service-identified specialties judged to be critical from a retention standpoint. Examples of these occupations include intelligence analysts, military police, computer programmers and operators, electronics technicians, avionics specialists, and pilots and navigators.<sup>8</sup> Installations were selected where a reasonable mix of individuals in those occupations were located. We sought to obtain equal numbers of participants from each service and to randomly select survey participants to the extent possible from installation personnel roster data, using the targeted job occupations as the primary selection criterion. However, not all randomly selected individuals participated. Some selected participants were unavailable the day we administered the survey, some of the installation personnel roster information was incomplete or inaccurate, and therefore, some selected personnel were not at the designated location, and a bomb threat during one installation visit required us to cancel two survey sessions. As a result, we asked DOD officials at each of the five installations to help us identify additional military personnel to participate in the survey. Randomly selected individuals who were unavailable to participate were replaced, where possible, with individuals from like military specialties. We did not ask participants to provide their name or other personally identifying information on the survey. Therefore, it is not possible to determine the final proportion of the sample that was randomly or nonrandomly selected. Given the basis of sample selection, the results may not be generally applicable to other personnel in these or other occupations located at these or other installations.

In developing the survey, we began by adopting the definition of quality of life consistent with DOD's broad definition. However, we also reviewed published and available survey instruments used to measure quality of life or to survey general personnel issues developed in academic settings, the private sector, DOD, and the individual military services. To further guide the inclusion of appropriate items, we reviewed the literature on quality of life and employee retention for both military and civilian populations and we interviewed active duty military personnel. The survey was field tested to check for clarity, relevance, and completion time and changes were made where appropriate.

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<sup>8</sup>Tables I.1-2 include a list of the occupations of the enlisted military personnel and officers who participated in the survey.

We had a panel of independent experts, including retired senior military officers, academic and general content experts, and a former private industry executive, review the survey and provide comments that were incorporated where appropriate. In addition, at the start of focus group discussions, we solicited feedback from the participants regarding the survey's adequacy (or inadequacy) in addressing relevant quality of life issues. The consensus was that the survey adequately covered the quality of life areas that mattered to them in thinking about decisions to stay or leave the military.

The survey contained eight general categories of questions representing different elements of military quality of life. Each category had approximately six items that the participants rated their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with on a 5-point scale.<sup>9</sup> The survey also included items to obtain intentions to stay or leave the military, background and demographic information, workload and deployment tempo, training, and other issues.<sup>10</sup> Since the survey did not include an exhaustive list of all possible quality of life factors, participants were given an opportunity to provide written comments on any quality of life issue they wished to on the last page of the survey.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 500 participants, more than half of the sample, provided written comments that were predominantly negative in tone. They included references to multiple military personnel issues that needed to be addressed to improve quality of life, including recurrent references to career-related issues such as promotions and the quality of the force. We plan to systematically analyze the written comments and discuss the results in our final report.

We conducted our review between October 1998 and June 1999 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

This report is organized into four briefing sections. Section I discusses the survey results concerning intentions to stay and leave the military. Section II discusses the survey results concerning levels of satisfaction and

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<sup>9</sup>The eight quality of life categories included in the survey were Current Monetary Compensation; Current Military Benefits; Retirement Benefits; Military Career Issues; Work Circumstances; Military Culture; Family Support Services; and Other Issues. Examples of items under the Work Circumstances category include personal workload, availability of needed equipment, parts and materials, and level of unit manning. In summarizing the results, we collapsed the eight categories to three broad categories: Work Circumstances, Military Compensation, and Military Benefits.

<sup>10</sup>Tables II.1-4 include a profile of Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps survey participants.

<sup>11</sup>The survey form is in appendix III.

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dissatisfaction with the military. Section III discusses the survey results concerning sources of dissatisfaction and reasons to leave the military. Section IV discusses survey results concerning sources of satisfaction and reasons to stay in the military.

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As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to other appropriate congressional committees. We will also send copies to the Honorable William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Louis Caldera, Secretary of the Army; the Honorable Richard Danzig, Secretary of the Navy; the Honorable F. Whitten Peters, Secretary of the Air Force; and General James L. Jones, Commandant of the Marine Corps. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3092. Key contributors to this assignment were John Oppenheim, Carolyn Copper, and Yeewan Tom.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kwai-Cheung Chan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kwai-Cheung Chan, Director  
Special Studies and Evaluation Issues

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**Abbreviations**

DOD	Department of Defense
MWR	Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

# Intention to Stay or Leave the Military Among Surveyed Military Personnel

**GAO** Percent of Surveyed Servicemembers in Retention Critical Specialties Who Intend to Stay or Leave the Military

	<u>Officers</u>		<u>Enlisted</u>	
	<u>Leave</u>	<u>Stay</u>	<u>Leave</u>	<u>Stay</u>
<b>Army</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Navy</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Air Force</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Marine Corps</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>34%</b>

Note: Sample size for officers; Army n = 40; Navy n = 55; Air Force n = 45; Marine Corps n = 70. Sample size for enlisted personnel; Army n = 175; Navy n = 217; Air Force n = 166; Marine Corps n = 180. The percents above do not add to 100 because respondents who indicated they were unsure of their decision to stay or leave are not included.



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**Briefing Section I**  
**Intention to Stay or Leave the Military**  
**Among Surveyed Military Personnel**

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Participants were asked to indicate, on a 5-point scale, whether they intended to stay or leave the military after their current obligation/term was up.<sup>1</sup> A greater proportion of surveyed officers in the Navy and the Air Force indicated an intention to stay in the military rather than leave. More than half of the Army officers indicated intentions to leave the military and a higher percentage of Marine Corps officers indicated intentions to leave, rather than stay in the military.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to officers, in all services more of the enlisted personnel surveyed indicated intentions to leave the military after their current term of enlistment was up.<sup>3</sup> In the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, more than 50 percent of enlisted personnel indicated an intention to leave the military. The percent of Navy enlisted personnel indicating an intention to leave was the largest relative to the other services. Less than 50 percent of Marine Corps enlisted personnel indicated an intention to leave the military. This is the smallest percent relative to the other services.

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<sup>1</sup>The results reflect the percentage that said (1) they somewhat intended to leave, definitely intended to leave or had to leave and (2) they somewhat intended to stay or definitely intended to stay.

<sup>2</sup>One possible reason for the differences in these service-specific rates may be related to differences in the years of service of the survey participants from each service. For example, while the Army officers indicated the highest intent to leave among the services, they also had the lowest average number of years of service invested in a military career.

<sup>3</sup>Between 1988 and 1998 officer continuation rates were higher than enlisted personnel retention rates across the services, indicating that officers were more likely to stay than leave the military compared to enlisted personnel.

# Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction With the Military Among Surveyed Military Personnel

**GAO** Percent of Surveyed Servicemembers in Retention Critical Specialties Who Are Satisfied and Dissatisfied With the Military

	<u>Officers</u>		<u>Enlisted</u>	
	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>
<b>Army</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Navy</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Air Force</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Marine Corps</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>47%</b>

Note: Sample size for officers; Army n = 40; Navy n = 55; Air Force n = 45, Marine Corps n = 70. Sample size for enlisted personnel; Army n = 175; Navy n = 217; Air Force n = 166; Marine Corps n = 180. Some respondents indicated that they were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, therefore, the percents do not add to 100.

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**Briefing Section II  
Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction With the  
Military Among Surveyed Military Personnel**

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Participants were asked to indicate, on a 5-point scale, their overall satisfaction with the military.<sup>1</sup> At least 50 percent of surveyed officers in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps were satisfied with the military. However, 65 percent of Navy officers were dissatisfied with the military. More Navy officers were dissatisfied with the military than any other officer or enlisted group.

In contrast, in all services except the Marine Corps, more enlisted personnel were dissatisfied than satisfied with the military. The percent of Air Force enlisted personnel who were dissatisfied was the highest among the services. The percent of Marine Corps enlisted personnel who were satisfied with the military was the highest among services. This was also the case regarding the percent of Marine Corps enlisted personnel indicating an intention to stay in the military, although a higher percent indicated they were satisfied (47 percent) than would stay (34 percent).

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<sup>1</sup>The results reflect the percents that were very or somewhat dissatisfied and very or somewhat satisfied.

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# Quality of Life Factors That Were Dissatisfiers and Reasons to Leave

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The findings in the next two briefing sections summarize survey respondents' opinions regarding quality of life factors. First, briefing section III shows (1) the factors that survey respondents indicated the most dissatisfaction with and (2) the factors that were most frequently identified as being reasons to leave by the respondents who said that they intended to leave at the end of their current enlistment/obligation. Second, briefing section IV shows (1) the factors that survey respondents were most satisfied with and (2) the reasons that were most frequently identified as being reasons to stay by those servicemembers who said that they intended to stay in the military.

Two analytic points regarding the information in briefing sections III and IV are pertinent. First, factors that are dissatisfiers may also be reasons why people leave the military, although not everyone who is dissatisfied will be inclined to leave. Similarly, not everyone who is satisfied will stay in the military and factors that servicemembers are most satisfied with may not necessarily be the strongest reasons to stay in the military. Additional analyses will be included in our final report, examining these more complex relationships.

Second, at about the same time that our survey began, DOD announced that it would include in its fiscal year 2000 budget proposal a change in the military retirement system reinstating the opportunity to receive 50 percent of base pay after 20 years of service, rather than the current level of 40 percent of base pay after 20 years of service for military personnel who entered the service after 1986. Further, DOD announced that a military pay increase would also be included as part of its fiscal year 2000 budget proposal.<sup>1</sup> DOD officials stated that the rationale for the change in retirement was that the current level of retirement pay was a major factor in the ability to retain military personnel and that military personnel were dissatisfied with their retirement benefits. The proposed military pay increase was also said to address retention concerns. DOD's pay and retirement proposals were highly publicized and received extensive news

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<sup>1</sup>At the time this report was being prepared Congress was considering DOD's budget request as part of its authorization and appropriations process for fiscal year 2000.

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**Briefing Section III  
Quality of Life Factors That Were  
Dissatisfiers and Reasons to Leave**

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coverage that could have affected the salience of retirement pay and base pay as a dissatisfier and/or a reason to leave the military among the participants in our survey who became aware of them. However, after the fact, it is impossible to precisely quantify the effect this may have had on the survey respondents.

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**GAO** Rank Order of Quality of Life Factors Surveyed  
Servicemembers in Retention Critical Specialties Were  
Dissatisfied With

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**Officers**

1. Availability of needed equipment, parts, & materials
2. Medical care for military dependents
3. Level of unit manning
4. Retirement pay
5. Access to medical and dental care (in retirement)
6. Frequency of deployments
7. Civilian military leaders
8. Ability to spend time with family and friends
9. Amount of personal time I have

**Enlisted**

1. Retirement pay
2. Availability of needed equipment, parts, & materials
3. Level of unit manning
4. Base pay
5. Frequency of deployments
6. Reenlistment bonus program
7. Morale in unit
8. Ability to spend time with family and friends
9. Medical care for military dependents
10. Nature of deployments

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Note: Officers, n = 210; Enlisted personnel, n = 739

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**Briefing Section III  
Quality of Life Factors That Were  
Dissatisfiers and Reasons to Leave**

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Participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with 44 quality of life factors. Factors that received a mean score between 1.00-2.60, on a 5-point scale, were in the dissatisfied range.<sup>2</sup> Nine of the 44 quality of life factors rated by officers and 10 rated by enlisted personnel met this criterion.

There were differences between surveyed officers and enlisted in terms of the specific ranking of the quality of life factors they were dissatisfied with, and there were unique dissatisfiers for both groups. First, officers were the most dissatisfied with the availability of needed equipment, parts, and materials. On the other hand, retirement pay was the top ranked dissatisfier for enlisted personnel and availability of needed equipment, parts, and materials ranked second. Retirement pay was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among officers. Unfortunately, the survey results did not enable us to fully ascertain the nature of certain dissatisfiers. For example, it is unclear whether concern about retirement pay is based on the lack of vesting before 20 years of service, the unavailability of tax-deferred savings plans, or the current accrual formulas. These issues will be explored further in a separate DOD/GAO survey later this year.

Differences between officers and enlisted personnel concerning dissatisfaction with retirement pay may be partially explained by the fact that a larger percent of the enlisted personnel surveyed (79 percent), compared to officers (59 percent), entered the service after July 31, 1986, and are therefore under the "Redux" retirement plan. Military personnel under the Redux retirement system receive a smaller percentage of their base pay in retirement than personnel not under the Redux plan.

Officers had three unique dissatisfiers and enlisted had four. The three dissatisfiers that were unique to the officers we surveyed were civilian military leaders, amount of personal time, and access to medical and dental care in retirement. The four dissatisfiers that were unique to the enlisted personnel surveyed were base pay, reenlistment bonus program, morale in the unit, and the nature of deployments.

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<sup>2</sup>Factors meeting this criterion are referred to as "dissatisfiers". We chose 2.6 as the criterion because there was a clearer separation in mean scores at this level than at 2.5.

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**Briefing Section III  
Quality of Life Factors That Were  
Dissatisfiers and Reasons to Leave**

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Our preliminary analysis indicated that the nature of work circumstances for military personnel generally accounted for the majority of all the factors that military personnel were dissatisfied with (62 percent).<sup>3</sup> These include the availability of needed equipment, parts, and materials; levels of unit manning; frequency of deployments; civilian military leaders; amount of personal time available; ability to spend time with family and friends; morale in the unit; and the nature of deployments. The nature of military compensation accounted for less than a quarter (23 percent) of all the factors military personnel were dissatisfied with.<sup>4</sup> These include retirement pay, base pay, and reenlistment bonus programs. The nature of military benefits accounted for 15 percent of all the factors military personnel were dissatisfied with.<sup>5</sup> These include medical care for military dependents and access to medical and dental care in retirement.

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<sup>3</sup>Forty-one percent of the 44 quality of life factors included in the survey were broadly related to work circumstances.

<sup>4</sup>Fourteen percent of the 44 quality of life factors included in the survey were broadly related to military compensation.

<sup>5</sup>Forty-five percent of the 44 quality of life factors in the survey were broadly related to military benefits.



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**GAO** The Five Most Frequently Selected Reasons to Leave the  
Military Among Surveyed Servicemembers in Retention Critical  
Specialties Indicating an Intention to Leave

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Officers

1. Retirement pay
2. Frequency of deployments
3. Base Pay
4. Availability of needed equipment,  
parts, & materials
5. Level of unit manning

Enlisted

1. Base pay
2. Frequency of deployments
3. Retirement pay
4. Promotion opportunities
5. Ability to spend time with family &  
friends

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Note: Among officers, retirement pay and frequency of deployments were selected with the same frequency. The number of officers who indicated an intention to leave and who provided information on reasons to leave was n = 83. The number of enlisted personnel who indicated an intention to leave and who provided information on reasons to leave was n = 451.

There are assorted reasons that impact military personnel's decisions to leave the military. As a baseline, participants were asked to identify three factors from the list of 44 quality of life factors they had previously rated. Participants were not asked to rank order their choices in terms of most to least important. Thirty-nine factors, or 87 percent of all of the factors, were

selected as a reason to leave the military by at least one or more of the survey participants who indicated an intention to leave the military.

Among the officers surveyed, there was no single factor that a majority of the respondents indicated was a reason to leave the military. The top five most frequently selected reasons to leave the military were fairly evenly distributed in terms of the number that selected these reasons. Twenty-eight percent of officers selected retirement pay; 28 percent selected the frequency of deployments; 25 percent selected base pay; 22 percent selected availability of needed equipment, parts, and materials; and 20 percent selected the level of unit manning as a reason to leave the military.<sup>6</sup>

Among the enlisted personnel surveyed, 48 percent indicated base pay was a reason to leave the military, making this the most frequently selected reason to leave the military. In terms of the remaining top five factors, 23 percent selected frequency of deployments, 22 percent selected retirement pay, 21 percent selected promotion opportunities, and 16 percent selected ability to spend time with family and friends.<sup>7</sup>

All of the factors that officers highlighted as reasons to leave the military, except base pay, were also listed as dissatisfiers. The fact that base pay was not a dissatisfier for officers is consistent with the results of another question included in the survey about financial condition. On average, 77 percent of the officers reported that they either were very comfortable financially or were able to make ends meet without much difficulty. In comparison, 40 percent of enlisted personnel said that they were very comfortable financially or were able to make ends meet without much difficulty and base pay was a dissatisfier for enlisted personnel overall. However, more than one reason suggests that base pay may contribute to the stated intention to leave. First, as we noted earlier, responses could have been influenced by the attention associated with DOD's proposed pay increase that occurred at the same time as our survey. Second, as might be expected, base pay may have been cited as a reason to leave to reflect the potential pull of higher paying jobs outside of the military. While we did not collect data on this issue, in focus group discussions and written

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<sup>6</sup>The percentages will not add to 100 because the respondents selected more than one reason to leave the military.

<sup>7</sup>The percentages will not add to 100 because the respondents selected more than one reason to leave the military.

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**Briefing Section III  
Quality of Life Factors That Were  
Dissatisfiers and Reasons to Leave**

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comments, participants referred to the fact that higher paying civilian jobs supply one incentive to leave.

The survey item that asked military personnel to identify reasons influencing them to leave did not require them to explain why they selected the factors they did. This has analytic implications for those leave factors where the core issue, or potential problem, may be more open to interpretation (e.g., retirement pay) than factors where the core issue is clearer by definition (e.g., frequency of deployments). The other data we collected from focus groups and written comments in reference to retirement pay issues indicated that military personnel were generally dissatisfied with the amount of retirement pay (i.e., the percent of base pay received and perceived inequities). However, there were instances where military personnel expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that they do not become vested in their retirement plan until after serving 20 years in the military and the fact that the military retirement system does not offer the same type of benefits as conventional private sector or nonmilitary federal plans do.

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# Quality of Life Factors That Were Satisfiers and Reasons to Stay

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**GAO** Rank Order of Quality of Life Factors Surveyed  
Servicemembers in Retention Critical Specialties Were  
Satisfied With

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**Officers**

1. Fitness and sports activities
2. Chaplain services/religious ministries
3. Commissary benefits
4. Immediate supervisors
5. Use of commissary (in retirement)
6. Military values & lifestyle
7. Use of exchange (in retirement)
8. Use of military recreation facilities (in retirement)
9. Exchange benefits
10. Golf course
11. Education assistance
12. Youth & adolescent programs
13. Living in new locations
14. Dental care for military members
15. Sense of esprit de corps
16. Military family support services
17. DODD & DDESS schools

**Enlisted**

1. Fitness and sports activities
2. Commissary benefits
3. Chaplain services/religious ministries
4. Exchange benefits
5. Use of exchange (in retirement)
6. Use of commissary (in retirement)
7. Use of military recreation facilities (in retirement)
8. Education assistance
9. Golf course
10. Military family support services
11. Dental care for military members
12. Immediate supervisors
13. DODD & DDESS schools
14. Youth & adolescent programs

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Note: Officers, n = 210; Enlisted personnel, n = 739

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**Briefing Section IV  
Quality of Life Factors That Were Satisfiers  
and Reasons to Stay**

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Factors that received a mean score between 3.40 and 5.00, on a 5-point scale, were in the satisfied range.<sup>1</sup> Officers were satisfied with 17 of the 44 quality of life factors and enlisted were satisfied with 14 factors.

The top satisfier for both officers and enlisted personnel was fitness and sports activities. Most of the top factors that officers and enlisted personnel were satisfied with represent conventional Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) activities, such as fitness and sports activities, as well as commissary and exchange benefits and golf courses. Using our broad categories, we found that the majority (76 percent) of the quality of life factors that military personnel were satisfied with were associated with military benefits. The nature of work circumstances accounted for 24 percent of the factors that personnel were satisfied with. Military compensation factors did not account for any of the factors surveyed military personnel were satisfied with.

Immediate supervisors was the only work-circumstance-related factor that enlisted personnel were satisfied with. Officers also said they were satisfied with their immediate supervisors. However, other aspects of work circumstances that officers were also satisfied with included military values and lifestyle, living in new locations, and sense of esprit de corps.

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<sup>1</sup>Factors meeting this criterion are referred to as “satisfiers”. The range for satisfiers was set to encompass the same point range as dissatisfiers (i.e., 1.60 points).

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**GAO** The Five Most Frequently Selected Reasons to Stay in the  
Military Among Surveyed Servicemembers in Retention Critical  
Specialties Indicating an Intention to Stay

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<u>Officers</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>
1. Military values & lifestyle	1. Medical care for military members
2. Sense of esprit de corps	2. Retirement pay
3. Retirement pay	3. Education assistance
4. Military training opportunities	4. Military values & lifestyle
5. Promotion opportunities	5. Base pay

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Note: The number officers who indicated an intention to stay in the military and who provided information on reasons to stay was n = 80. The number of enlisted personnel who indicated an intention to stay and who provided information on reasons to stay was n = 166.

According to the military personnel we surveyed, there are assorted reasons that impact their decisions to stay in the military. Participants were asked to identify three factors that most make them want to stay in the military. Participants were not asked to rank order their choices in terms of most to least important. As a baseline, they were asked to identify these factors from the list of 44 quality of life factors they had previously rated. Forty of the 44 factors, or 91 percent of all of the factors, were



identified as a reason to stay in the military by at least one or more of the survey participants.

Among the officers surveyed, the top two reasons to stay in the military, military values and lifestyle (54 percent selected) and sense of esprit de corps (44 percent selected), represent fairly intangible aspects of military life. In terms of the remaining top five factors for officers, 30 percent selected retirement pay, 18 percent selected military training opportunities, and 15 percent indicated promotion opportunities were reasons to stay in the military.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of the top five reasons to stay in the military among the enlisted personnel we surveyed, 25 percent selected medical care for military members, 24 percent selected retirement pay, 20 percent selected education assistance, 19 percent selected military values and lifestyles, and 14 percent selected base pay.<sup>3</sup>

Generally, the officers and enlisted personnel did not indicate that the factors they were satisfied with were also reasons to stay in the military. Among officers, two of the five most frequently selected reasons to stay in the military were also satisfiers (i.e., military values and lifestyle and sense of esprit de corps), whereas only one of the five reasons identified by enlisted personnel were satisfiers (i.e., education assistance). In comparison, the reverse generally applied regarding what factors military personnel were dissatisfied with and what they indicated were reasons to leave the military. For both officers and enlisted personnel who intended to leave, four of the five leave reasons, or 80 percent, were also dissatisfiers.

Retirement pay is a reason to stay and a reason to leave the military for both officers and enlisted personnel. Our survey results suggest that one reason for this may be the career stage of military personnel. Officers who said that they intended to stay in the military and that retirement pay was a reason to stay, had, on average, completed more than two times the number of years of service (i.e., 15 years) as officers who said that they intended to leave the military and retirement pay was a reason to leave (i.e., 7 years).

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<sup>2</sup>The percentages will not add to 100 because the respondents selected more than one reason to stay in the military.

<sup>3</sup>The percentages will not add to 100 because the respondents selected more than one reason to stay in the military.

Similarly, enlisted military personnel who said that they intended to stay in the military and that retirement pay was a reason to stay had served twice the average number of years (i.e., 12 years) of enlisted personnel who said they were going to leave the military and retirement pay was a reason to leave (i.e., 6 years). Military personnel with many years of service completed, who are comparatively nearer to retirement, may have identified with retirement pay as a reason to stay, whereas those with fewer years may be concerned with changes that have occurred in military personnel's retirement pay and may have identified with it as a reason to leave.<sup>4</sup> Additional work is needed to ascertain the nature of related concerns and comments regarding retirement pay. This will be accomplished as part of a separate DOD/GAO survey later this year.

Among enlisted personnel only, base pay shows up as a reason to leave and stay in the military. Differences in the career stage of enlisted personnel who said that base pay was a reason to stay and leave the military suggest one explanation. The enlisted personnel who said that they intended to stay in the military and that base pay was a reason to stay, on average, served 9 years in the military, while the enlisted personnel who said that they were going to leave the military, and that base pay was one reason to leave had served an average of 6 years. More years of service is associated with relatively higher base pay, conversely, fewer years of service is associated with relatively lower base pay. Moreover, the more than 200 enlisted military personnel who said they were going to leave and base pay was a reason to leave indicated that they were dissatisfied with base pay. In contrast, the less than 25 enlisted personnel who said they were going to stay in the military and base pay was a reason to stay indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with base pay.

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<sup>4</sup>Military personnel do not become vested in their retirement benefits before 20 years of service.

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# Occupational Specialties of Survey Participants

**Table I.1: Occupations of Enlisted Military Personnel**

<b>Occupations of Participants<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Number in Our Survey<sup>b</sup></b>
Communications and intelligence specialists	155
Electrical/mechanical equipment repairers	145
Functional support and administration	108
Infantry, gun crews, and seamanship specialists	92
Electronic equipment repairers	86
Service and supply handlers	30
Health care specialists	12
Craftworkers	5
Other technical and allied specialists	3
Undecipherable occupations <sup>c</sup>	53
No occupations provided by participants	50

<sup>a</sup> Service job specialty codes are based on one-digit Department of Defense (DOD) occupational codes.

<sup>b</sup> There were 739 enlisted military personnel that participated in the survey.

<sup>c</sup> Participant's response was either insufficient to identify or did not match any of the service occupational codes. Because we did not request names or other personally identifying information on the survey, we could not resolve questionable job occupation information after the fact. Therefore, a DOD occupational code could not be assigned.

Each of the broad occupational categories in table I.1, except for “craftworkers” and “other technical and allied specialists” contain the service-identified retention critical military specialties that were targeted in the survey. For example, included in the “communications and intelligence specialists” occupational category are the following Army-identified critical occupations: intelligence analysts, imagery analysts, voice interceptor specialists, and cavalry scouts. The Navy-identified critical occupations included in this category are radiomen (surface) and operations specialist. The Air Force-identified critical occupations included in this category are air traffic control and crypto-linguist. The Marine Corps-identified critical occupations included in this category are counterintelligence Marine, imagery interpretation specialist, interrogation-translation specialist, and cryptologic linguist (Arabic).

**Appendix I  
Occupational Specialties of Survey  
Participants**

**Table I.2: Occupations of Officers**

<b>Occupations of Participants<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Number in Our Survey<sup>b</sup></b>
Tactical operations officers	141
Intelligence officers	21
Supply, procurement and allied officers	21
Engineering and maintenance officers	9
Administrators	6
Scientist and professionals	3
Undecipherable occupations <sup>c</sup>	6
No occupations provided by participants	3

<sup>a</sup> Service job specialty codes are based on one-digit DOD occupational codes.

<sup>b</sup> There were 210 commissioned officers that participated in the survey. Warrant officers (n=34) are not included.

<sup>c</sup> Participant's response was either insufficient to identify or did not match any of the service occupational codes. Because we did not request names or other personally identifying information on the survey, we could not resolve questionable job occupation information after the fact. Therefore, a DOD occupational code could not be identified.

The broad occupational category entitled, “tactical operations officers” contains the service-identified retention critical occupations for officers. At minimum, each of the services indicated that pilots (Apache pilots specifically for the Army) were among the retention critical officer occupations. Two-thirds of the individuals in the tactical operations category are fixed or rotary-wing pilots or navigators. In addition, the category contains surface warfare officers (department heads), identified by the Navy as a retention critical occupation.

# Profile of Survey Participants

**Table II.1: Profile of Army Sample (Fort Drum)**

	<b>Enlisted</b>	<b>Officer</b>
Sample size <sup>a</sup>	175	40
Percent married	53	60
Percent single	39	35
Percent divorced	5	3
Percent with second jobs	4	0
Percent financially comfortable	34	80
Percent who entered the service after July 31, 1986	90	83
Most frequently selected reason for joining the military	Get money for education	Serve my country
Average education level	Less than 2 years of college credits	4-year college degree
Average years of service	5	6
Average hours worked per week on current military assignment	49	62
Average weeks away on deployments, temporary duty, and overnight training exercises in 1998	13 (91 days)	15 (105 days)

<sup>a</sup> Three participants from the Army did not identify their paygrade. Warrant officers are not included (n=21).

**Appendix II**  
**Profile of Survey Participants**

**Table II.2: Profile of Navy Sample (Norfolk Naval Base)**

	<b>Enlisted</b>	<b>Officer</b>
Sample size	217	55
Percent married	47	69
Percent single	37	20
Percent divorced	8	5
Percent with second jobs	13	0
Percent financially comfortable	47	76
Percent who entered the service after July 31, 1986	86	65
Most frequently selected reason for joining the military	Get money for education	Serve my country
Average education level	Less than 2 years of college credits	Some graduate school, but no graduate degree
Average years of service	6	10
Average hours worked per week on current military assignment	53	60
Average weeks away on deployments, temporary duty, and overnight training exercises in 1998	19 (133 days)	21 (147 days)

**Appendix II**  
**Profile of Survey Participants**

**Table II.3: Profile of Air Force Sample (Langley Air Force Base)**

	<b>Enlisted</b>	<b>Officer</b>
Sample size	167	45
Percent married	57	82
Percent single	28	11
Percent divorced	7	4
Percent with second jobs	12	0
Percent financially comfortable	37	73
Percent who entered the service after July 31, 1986	58	27
Most frequently selected reason for joining the military	Obtain job related skills	Serve my country
Average education level	2-year college degree	Master's, doctoral, or professional school degree
Average years of service	10	14
Average hours worked per week on current military assignment	49	53
Average weeks away on deployments, temporary duty, and overnight training exercises in 1998	9 (63 days)	9 (63 days)



**Appendix II**  
**Profile of Survey Participants**

**Table II.4: Profile of Marine Corps Sample (Camp Lejeune and New River Marine Corps Air Station)**

	<b>Enlisted</b>	<b>Officer</b>
Sample size <sup>a</sup>	180	70
Percent married	51	74
Percent single	41	19
Percent divorced	5	6
Percent with second jobs	12	0
Percent financially comfortable	40	80
Percent who entered the service after July 31, 1986	80	59
Most frequently selected reason for joining the military	Serve my country	Serve my country
Average education level	Less than 2 years of college credits	4-year college degree
Average years of service	6	10
Average hours worked per week on current military assignment	46	58
Average weeks away on deployments, temporary duty, and overnight training exercises in 1998	9 (63 days)	13 (91 days)

<sup>a</sup> Warrant officers are not included ( n = 13 ).

# Survey Instrument



United States General Accounting Office

## Quality of Life Questionnaire

### DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) is administering this questionnaire to obtain information from active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces concerning various aspects of their military service. The purpose of our review is to better understand the factors that are important to service members when thinking about staying in the military today.

Providing information on this form is completely voluntary. However, your views on the information in this questionnaire are very important to our review. We want your input based on your own experience.

Since we are unable to interview everyone individually, we are asking people to complete this questionnaire. We hope you will answer each question on this form as truthfully as possible.

### PRIVACY PROTECTION

GAO will take steps to protect the privacy of the information you provide. We have not requested names or identification numbers.

### DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read each question and all possible responses carefully before choosing an answer. You may use a pen or pencil.

You will be asked to supply two types of answers.

- Most often, you should mark one answer for each question by writing an "X" across the box that best describes you or your opinion. For the opinion questions, there are no right or wrong answers. Your honest opinions are what we seek.
- Other questions ask you to write a short answer or a more detailed statement. ***If you need additional space for your answer, write on the last page of the questionnaire.*** Be sure to include the question number for your additional comments.

**Appendix III  
Survey Instrument**

**Satisfaction With Aspects of the Military**

Based on your experience in the service, rate your satisfaction with the following aspects associated with being in the military.

**1. Current Monetary Compensation**

_ Very dissatisfied						
		_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
				_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		
						_ Somewhat satisfied
						_ Very satisfied
						_ Not applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Base military pay
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Special duty pay you receive
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Reenlistment bonus program
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Housing allowance (VHA)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Food allowance (BAS)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Other _____

**2. Current Military Benefits**

_ Very dissatisfied						
		_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
				_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		
						_ Somewhat satisfied
						_ Very satisfied
						_ Not applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Medical care for the military member
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Dental care for the military member
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Military-provided housing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Commissary benefits
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Exchange benefits
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Other _____

**3. Retirement Benefits (please answer even if you do not plan to stay until you are eligible to retire)**

_ Very dissatisfied						
		_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
				_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		
						_ Somewhat satisfied
						_ Very satisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Retirement pay
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Access to medical and dental care
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Use of military recreation facilities (for example, golf course)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Use of commissaries
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Use of exchanges
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Other _____

**Appendix III  
Survey Instrument**

**4. Military Career Issues**

_ Very dissatisfied					
	_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
		_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			
			_ Somewhat satisfied		
				_ Very satisfied	
				_ Not applicable	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Promotion opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Military training opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Nature of deployments
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Frequency of deployments
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Type of assignments
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Living in new locations
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	g. Other_____

**5. Work Circumstances**

_ Very dissatisfied					
	_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
		_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			
			_ Somewhat satisfied		
				_ Very satisfied	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Personal workload
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Availability of needed equipment, parts, and materials
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Level of manning in your unit
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Ability to spend time with family and friends
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Amount of personal time I have
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Other_____

**6. Military Culture**

_ Very dissatisfied					
	_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
		_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			
			_ Somewhat satisfied		
				_ Very satisfied	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Immediate supervisors
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Uniformed leaders in general
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Civilian military leaders in general
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Military values and lifestyle
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Sense of esprit de corps
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Unit stability
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	g. Morale in your unit
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	h. Other_____

**7. Family Support Services**

_ Very dissatisfied					
	_ Somewhat dissatisfied				
		_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			
			_ Somewhat satisfied		
				_ Very satisfied	
				_ Not applicable	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Youth and adolescent programs
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. DODDS and DDESS schools
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Spouse employment opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Military family support services
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Medical care for military dependents
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Other_____

**Appendix III  
Survey Instrument**

**8. Other Issues**

	_ Very dissatisfied					
	_ Somewhat dissatisfied		_ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			
	_ Somewhat satisfied		_ Very satisfied			
	_ Not applicable					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Fitness and sports activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Clubs
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Golf Courses
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Chaplain services/religious ministries
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Support services for single military members
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Education assistance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	g. Other _____

**9. Considering all of the factors in Questions 1-8, how satisfied are you with the military overall?**

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

**10. How satisfied is your spouse with the military overall?**

- I am not married
- I don't know
- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

**11. You will need to look at the aspects listed in Questions 1-8 to answer this question. You will be asked to write the number and letter associated with particular aspects. For example, you would write "8d" if you wanted to indicate "chaplain services/religious ministries."**

a. Which 3 aspects make you most want to stay in the military?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Which 3 aspects make you most want to leave the military?

\_\_\_\_\_

**12. What one change would have the greatest positive impact on retention of active duty service members in your military service? Write on the back of this page if you need more space.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix III  
Survey Instrument

Assignment Information

Military Career Views

13. What are your primary and duty military occupational specialties (MOSs)/ratings/Air Force specialty codes (AFSCs)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Primary MOS/rating/AFSC  
\_\_\_\_\_ Duty MOS/rating/AFSC

14. If you had the opportunity to select another military assignment or leave the service next month to take a full-time paying civilian job, which one of the following would you select.

- Leave the service and take a civilian job  
 Select a totally new military assignment  
 Remain in current military assignment  
 Return to previous military assignment

15. On average, how many hours per week do you work in . . .

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ your current military assignment  
\_\_\_ \_\_\_ a part-time civilian job (enter "0" if you do not have such a job)

16. During 1998, how many weeks were you away on deployments, TDY, and overnight training exercises because of your military assignment?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ weeks in 1998

17. How well have you been trained for your present assignment?

- Not at all trained  
 Barely trained  
 Somewhat trained  
 Well trained  
 Completely trained

18. How do you currently feel about your military assignment?

- Very dissatisfied  
 Somewhat dissatisfied  
 Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied  
 Somewhat satisfied  
 Very satisfied

19. Which one factor best describes your reason for joining the military?

- Get a job  
 Obtain job-related skills  
 See the world  
 Get money for an education  
 Earn a military retirement  
 Travel  
 Serve my country  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

20. How many more years of active duty military service do you plan to complete before you leave the military? *Round to the nearest whole number.*

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ more years of active duty service

21. Do you want to stay in or leave the military after your current obligation/term of enlistment is up?

- Definitely want to stay  
 Somewhat want to stay  
 Unsure what I want to do  
 Somewhat want to leave  
 Definitely want to leave

22. Do you intend to stay in or leave the military after your current obligation/term of enlistment is up?

- Definitely intend to stay  
 Somewhat intend to stay  
 Unsure what I intend to do  
 Somewhat intend to leave  
 Definitely intend to leave  
 Does not apply, I have to leave

23. How much influence does your spouse have on your decision to stay in or leave the military?

- Does not apply, I am not married  
 A good deal of influence  
 A little influence  
 No influence

Appendix III  
Survey Instrument

24. Consider how much you make now from regular pay, allowances, bonuses, and special pay. Would you make more or less money if you were working in a civilian job?

- Much less as a civilian
- Somewhat less as a civilian
- About the same as I make in the military
- Somewhat more as a civilian
- Much more as a civilian

25. Which of the following best describes your financial condition?

- Very comfortable and secure
- Able to make ends meet without much difficulty
- Occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet
- Tough to make ends meet but keeping my head above water
- In over my head

26. What are the sources(s) of your total personal income? Check all that apply.

- Income from my military pay
- Income from my spouse's job
- Income from my second job

Background Information

27. In what Service are you?

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- Marine Corps
- Coast Guard

28. Are you . . .

- Male
- Female

29. What race do you consider yourself to be?

- White
- Black, African-American
- Indian (Amer.) Eskimo, Aleut
- Asian, Pacific Islander
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

30. How much education have you completed? Mark the one answer that describes the highest grade or academic degree that you have completed.

- Less than 12 years of school (no diploma)
- GED or other high school equivalency certificate
- High school diploma
- Less than 2 years of college credits, but no college degree
- 2-year college degree (AA/AS)
- More than 2 years of college credits, but no 4-year college degree
- 4-year college degree (BA/BS)
- Some graduate school, but no graduate degree
- Master's, doctoral, or professional school degree (for example, MA/MS/PhD/MD)

31. What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Single, never married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

32. How many family members do you have? For this questionnaire, your family members are those people who could be claimed by you as a spouse or dependent on income taxes.

\_\_\_ family members (including yourself)

33. Where do you live?

- Barracks/dorm (including BEQ and BOQ)
- Aboard ship
- Military family housing on an installation
- Military family housing off an installation
- Off-installation housing that I rent
- Off-installation housing that I own

**Appendix III  
Survey Instrument**

**34. What is your paygrade?**

- |                              |                              |  |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> W-1 | <input type="checkbox"/> O-1           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> W-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> O-2           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> W-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> O-3           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> W-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> O-4           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> W-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> O-5           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-6 |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> O-6 and above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-7 |                              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-8 |                              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E-9 |                              |  |

**35. As of your last anniversary date, how many years of active duty service did you complete?**

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ years of active duty service

**36. When did you first enter military service?**

- Before September 8, 1980
- Between September 8, 1980 and July 31, 1986
- After July 31, 1986

**37. If you are in the process of separating from the military, indicate below the day, month, and year that you will officially separate from the service.**

\_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ (Day/Month/Year)

- I am not in the process of separating from the military.

***PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE***





# Comments From the Department of Defense



FORCE MANAGEMENT  
POLICY

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

JUL 12 1999

Mr. Kwai-Cheung Chan  
Director, Special Studies and Evaluation  
National Security and International Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Chan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, 'MILITARY PERSONNEL: Perspectives of Surveyed Service Members in Retention Critical Specialties,' dated June 17, 1999 (GAO Code 713032/OSD Case 1845). DoD does not object to the overall thrust of the report and agrees with the GAO comment that results of the survey may not be generally applicable to other personnel. DoD shares Congress' concern about quality of life and its impact on retention of a highly qualified force. DoD also agrees it is appropriate that the draft report makes no recommendations without further analysis. DoD does have concerns that several of the generalizations made from the survey results could suggest that shortcomings exist DoD-wide in general workforce climate. We also note that the study's definition of quality of life was expanded beyond the traditional DoD definition to include issues such as spare parts, equipment and unit manning.

We are gratified by the survey results that show Morale, Welfare and Recreation activities, to include fitness and sports activities, are top sources of satisfaction for military personnel. We believe that money spent for these purposes is money well spent and a solid contributor to Service members' quality of life. The Department's overall efforts to improve quality of life is fairly well documented in the report and it reflects our efforts to "Put People First". DoD's quality of life strategy recognizes that military personnel want good pay, educational opportunities, meaningful work, challenging off-duty opportunities, and good places to live. To address mounting warning signals about retention and recruiting, this year's budget included substantial increases in military compensation and other quality of life programs. FY 2000 President's budget contains significant programs and funding to lessen the retention problems being experienced by the Services. The budget contains a 4.4% pay raise, repeal of the REDUX retirement, pay table reform and increased funds for community support programs.

The Department disagrees with the draft report's reference that few accomplishments have been made regarding changes in personnel tempo and privatization of military housing:

- While deployments will always be a part of military life, the Services have made substantial improvements in the management of personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO) in the past few years. Each Service is addressing its specific PERSTEMPO concerns and has developed metrics reported on a monthly basis. DoD has also developed a Global Military Force Policy (GMFP) to manage low-density, high-demand forces to ensure their capabilities are efficiently allocated to each theater based on prioritized

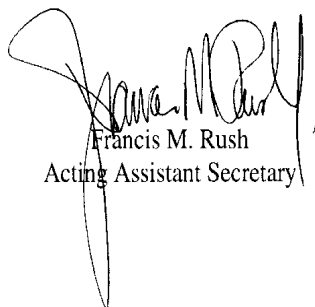


commander in chief (CINC) requirements. This policy also attempts to manage excessive tempo for high demand units, thereby increasing long-term readiness. The Department also continues to develop a centralized repository for PERSTEMPO data that will be able to monitor deployment demands placed on Service members.

- The Department's Military Housing Privatization Initiative, signed into law in 1996, is now an essential tool for solving our housing shortfalls. This initiative enables the Department to decrease its up-front construction expenses and eliminate the operations, maintenance, and management costs that are incurred over the life of traditional housing construction projects. Since 1996, DoD has made steady progress toward the privatization of military family housing. With the expected award of five more projects this fiscal year, DoD will have solid examples to help build a portfolio of success in our housing privatization efforts.

The GAO survey validates our position that no single factor impacts individual retention decisions. DoD is concerned that the suggestion on page three in the report to "pay special attention" to "work circumstances" may infer that less attention needs to be paid to other areas of quality of life. DoD believes that a holistic approach, as outlined in our overall QoL strategy, is more conducive to achieving our desired organizational outcomes. Additionally, for clarity, the factors identified as "other quality of life issues" in the draft report should be explicitly stated.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report. Specific technical comments on the draft report have been communicated to your staff.



Francis M. Rush  
Acting Assistant Secretary

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