

Chapter 1 – RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In many countries, achieving recruitment goals has become increasingly challenging. At the same time, military forces are facing an important loss of often highly qualified personnel who choose to leave. The difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers is aggravated by the fact that many military personnel leave voluntarily. It is not unusual for 30% or more of enlisted recruits not to complete their first term. In addition, many military personnel choose to return to civilian life later in their careers, attracted by more appealing opportunities. This happens frequently in specific trades that are hard and expensive to recruit and train.

A NATO Research Task Group (RTG) was established to examine these dilemmas in more detail. Specifically, its purpose was to foster a true understanding of the mechanisms that influence recruitment and retention (R&R) outcomes. This was accomplished by completing a program of work that produced:

- 1) Detailed reviews of and recommendations from ten important factors that influence recruitment and retention, which are:
 - Psychological contract;
 - Short-term consequences of (mis)information during recruitment and selection;
 - Management of recruitment, selection, and classification;
 - Values research;
 - Individual differences and later turnover;
 - Transition;
 - PERSTEMPO/OPSTEMPO and quality of life;
 - Pay and benefits;
 - Gender and minority issues; and
 - Advertising, marketing in recruiting.
- 2) Generic models of recruitment and retention in a military setting that list the most important influences on each of the processes and how those influences affect each process.
- 3) A summary of the participating countries' strategies to improve recruitment practices and enhance retention of military personnel.
- 4) A bibliography of the research used to produce the chapters for each of the factors described above.
- 5) A workshop held in December 2004 to disseminate the results of the work from the RTG.

1.1.1 Topic Chapters

The topics were chosen by an Exploratory Team and represented those subject areas with the greatest influence on recruiting and retention. The chapters contain a one page executive summary, a main body, links to the recruiting and retention models where relevant, and practical recommendations/implications

to improve recruiting and retention in that subject area. While the issues of R&R are complicated and multi-faceted, the topics focus on key influences of individual decisions and policies that affect individual choice.

The information gathered for each of the topic chapters came from research literature in that subject area. In addition, the research examined came almost entirely from journals or organizations that published material in English. Therefore, they were not complete reviews of the subject area, but are focussed on how individual topics were related to recruiting and retention. For instance, quality of life and levels of PERSTEMPO and OPSTEMPO have had a number of very specific consequences on service personnel. The goal of the literature review for this RTG was not to describe all those consequences, but to examine research that explained how these consequences affected or would affect recruitment and/or retention. Where there was little or no research that pertained to recruiting and retention in a military setting, literature was used from academic and business settings to theorize how it would apply in a military setting.

1.1.2 Recruiting and Turnover Models

Looking at the various models available in the literature, separate models have been developed for recruiting and retention. For each of them, the literature was combined to explain how each process operated in a military setting. From this description, recommendations are presented to optimize these processes. One executive summary was prepared for this chapter. A main body follows which describes both models, and the chapter concludes with a list of practical recommendations to improve recruiting and retention from each of the subject areas. For the purposes of this report, the term “turnover” will be used to describe both turnover and retention factors.

1.1.3 Recruitment and Retention Strategies

For the duration of the Task Group’s existence, the members gathered the recruitment and retention strategies being used in their countries. This information has been organized into one chapter and includes all strategies listed by country. The recommendations were gathered from each of the participating countries as a “lessons learned” exercise of what was and what was not effective in recruiting and retaining military personnel.

1.1.4 Recruitment and Retention Research Literature Database

A database on the research in recruiting and retention has also been prepared and lists the research that forms the basis of all the work that the Group conducted. It provides a reference for others to use to identify the key authors and research for each of the topic areas and includes references through 2005.

1.1.5 Extended Meeting Material

A special meeting was organized as part of the 2004 International Military Testing Association (IMTA) Conference focusing on the work the Task Group had completed on recruiting and retention up to that point. The presentations delivered at that conference are also included in this report as a final deliverable. Their inclusion ensures that all the work of the Task Group can be found in one report.