



NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

- CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS
- CIVIL JUSTICE
- EDUCATION
- ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
- HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
- INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
- POPULATION AND AGING
- PUBLIC SAFETY
- SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY
- TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
- U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

This PDF document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

[Jump down to document](#) ▼

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

Support RAND

[Purchase this document](#)

[Browse Books & Publications](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore the [RAND National Defense Research Institute](#)

View [document details](#)

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation monograph series. RAND monographs present major research findings that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors. All RAND monographs undergo rigorous peer review to ensure high standards for research quality and objectivity.

Expanding Enlisted Lateral Entry

Options and Feasibility

DINA LEVY

JOY MOINI

JENNIFER SHARP

HARRY J. THIE

Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Approved for public release, distribution unlimited



RAND

NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The research described in this report was sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The research was conducted in the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center supported by the OSD, the Joint Staff, the unified commands, and the defense agencies under Contract DASW01-01-C-0004

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Expanding enlisted lateral entry : options and feasibility / Dina Levy ... [et al.].

p. cm.

"MG-134."

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8330-3514-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. United States—Armed Forces—Recruiting, enlistment, etc. 2. Labor mobility—United States. I. Levy, Dina G.

UB333.E95 2004

355.2'2362'0973—dc22

2003027163

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

RAND® is a registered trademark.

© Copyright 2004 RAND Corporation

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from RAND.

Published 2004 by the RAND Corporation

1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050

201 North Craig Street, Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1516

RAND URL: <http://www.rand.org/>

To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact

Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;

Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org

Summary

Background

Most recruits into the U.S. military currently follow a set training pattern upon entry: new-entry training followed by occupational training. Some new recruits come to the military with advanced training or experience acquired outside the military, but in many cases the military retrain them in the same occupation or prepares them for a different occupation altogether. Several possible explanations exist for this seemingly inefficient practice. First, by choice, the military operates as a closed system. Except for a few exempt communities, recruits are expected to enter at the bottom, become acculturated, and complete service-provided training and experience to advance within the system. Second, the U.S. military currently has excess training capacity. Perhaps if the training capacity were limited in its ability to support recruiting needs, bypassing training through lateral entry of experienced personnel would be a more attractive option. Third, lateral entry of civilians into high ranks could be disruptive to the military culture. Yet, some forms of lateral entry into the military are accepted, including the awarding of advanced pay grades to doctors and lawyers in the officer corps and to enlisted band members based on nonmilitary training and experience. This report explores options for expanding a specific form of lateral entry: lateral entry of non-prior-service personnel into enlisted, active-duty occupations.

Several studies published in the 1990s explored the concept of lateral entry in detail and concluded that many military occupations are amenable to civilian training. In particular, occupations that are

not combat related, have a clear civilian counterpart, and are supported by multiple civilian training programs are likely to be good candidates (Winkler, Kirin, and Uebersax, 1992). In 1991, the Army launched a pilot study of lateral entry into one occupation—Light Wheeled Vehicle Mechanics (MOS 63B10). The study, which was completed in 1997, demonstrated that high school and postsecondary students with training in the occupation performed as well on an MOS Qualification Test as their military counterparts. However, for significant cost savings to be realized, a very large proportion of personnel would have to be recruited laterally without the benefit of enlistment bonuses. Lateral entry of 63B10 mechanics was never adopted into a formal program.

Only the Army and Navy have established lateral entry programs for enlisted occupations. The Army Civilian Acquired Skills Program (ACASP) offers enlistment at advanced pay grades for 98 occupations. The Navy's Direct Procurement Enlistment Program (DPEP) is open to all Navy ratings. Applicants for both programs must meet basic enlistment criteria as well as training and experience requirements in a particular skill area. Despite their existence for well over a decade, exceedingly few regular Army and Navy enlistments occur through the two programs (less than one-half of 1 percent). The Army plans to review ACASP, and the Navy is revisiting DPEP as part of its Task Force Excel initiative. The Coast Guard is also set to begin a pilot test of a new lateral entry program in the information technology skill areas. The most successful program we reviewed, however, is one recently implemented by the Canadian military. The Canadian Forces program targets 20 understrength occupations and offers enlistment bonuses to applicants who meet program requirements. This fiscal year-to-date, lateral entrants constitute more than 27 percent of recruits into the 20 occupations included in the program. The occupations that accept lateral entrants through ACASP, DPEP, and the Canadian Forces program are listed in the appendix.

Lateral entry is also used widely in the for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors. Across the country, lateral entry programs for K–12 teachers offer teaching credentials to applicants with relevant education and experience following an abbreviated course of study. A large

proportion of local police departments employ lateral entry as a means of recruiting personnel. Many federal agencies also hire laterally, but mostly from within the public sector. Finally, military personnel (most notably pilots and mechanics) routinely enter civilian occupations laterally.

None of the studies or programs we reviewed provided a comprehensive framework to support our goal of outlining program options for expanded use of lateral entry into enlisted occupations. However, we used lessons and insights gained from our review to create a framework that links program goals with program design and to generate the profile of a candidate program. Through analysis of relevant data, we then assessed the feasibility of implementing a program with the characteristics needed to achieve current lateral entry goals.

Linking Lateral Entry Goals with Program Features

A lateral entry program can be aimed at achieving at least four goals:

- reducing training costs,
- filling gaps in personnel profiles,
- expanding recruiting markets, and
- avoiding the disruption of general military culture.

Once the priority of goals for a given program is identified, program features should be selected to support them. Four categories of program features can be manipulated:

- occupations into which lateral entry will be permitted,
- training and experience levels required of lateral entrants,
- scale and flexibility of implementation, and
- incentive structure.

Occupations

The programs and studies we reviewed vary in their criteria for selection of occupations, and in some cases, the criteria do not correspond well with program goals. In general, programs that seek to reduce training costs should include occupations with high military training

costs per trainee relative to other military occupations or relative to civilian counterpart occupations. Alternatively, occupations with lower military training costs per person but large numbers of personnel to be trained are reasonable candidates.

Entry Point

Existing lateral entry programs accept entrants at a range of grade levels, up to E-7. All programs require completion of basic training upon entry, and most award rank at entry based on training and experience. Entry requirements should be tailored to program goals, but goals can sometimes compete with respect to those requirements. For instance, a program aimed at reducing training costs would experience the most significant savings if lateral entrants joined the force with advanced levels of training and experience and could skip military occupational training altogether. However, transplanting civilians into leadership positions through lateral entry is likely to be disruptive.

Implementation Scale

As noted above, existing lateral entry programs in the U.S. operate on a very small scale. The number of personnel recruited through lateral entry programs in the Army and Navy is negligible, and neither program has a dedicated staff or budget. The Canadian Forces program operates on a significantly larger scale. Decisions about the scale of a program depend on goals and constraints. The primary goal of the Canadian program is to fill personnel shortages in specific occupations while constrained by a saturated military training infrastructure. The Canadian military can therefore avoid the costs of augmenting its training infrastructure by adopting a lateral entry strategy. On the other hand, the U.S. military training infrastructure has excess capacity. To achieve meaningful reductions in training costs, it must eliminate significant portions of its training infrastructure and implement lateral entry on a large scale.

Incentive Structure

Crafting an appropriate incentive structure can be central to the success or failure of a lateral entry program. Existing programs in the U.S. suffer from inadequate incentives for both recruiters and recruits and a lack of integration into the established personnel management structure. Our review suggests that in some cases, incentives are not offered because they would negate the savings associated with a reduced training load. In cases where incentives are offered, they sometimes have a negative effect. In particular, advanced promotion opportunities and special educational benefits offered to ACASP participants are resented by personnel for whom such benefits are not made available.

Options for Expanding Use to Reduce Training Costs

In the present environment, the sponsor of this work considers the potential to reduce training costs the primary motivation for more widespread lateral entry. Filling personnel gaps and expanding recruiting markets are viewed as lower priorities, and the goal of preserving cohesion and culture is considered more of a constraint on the practice of lateral entry than a goal to be achieved. The focus of the last chapter of this report is therefore on outlining the characteristics of a program designed to reduce training costs and evaluating its feasibility.

Based on the preceding analysis, we conclude that a suitable program should include the following features:

- *Occupations with high military training costs.* We identified the top 10 percent of noncombat occupations with respect to training cost in the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- *Entrants with advanced training.* To avoid training costs on an effective scale, lateral entrants should have completed at least the equivalent of advanced training in an occupation.
- *A large number of prospective lateral entrants; excess external labor supply.* High-level lateral entry can threaten cohesion, but its

effects are likely to be reduced if most or all members of an occupation are recruited laterally. Large numbers of entrants who can skip military training also enable meaningful reductions in training costs. In anticipation of the need to manage the risks of eliminating training infrastructure and of depending on lateral entry to fill personnel requirements, we looked for occupations that have consistent excesses in external labor supply.

- *Occupations with low civilian earnings.* Like other entrants, lateral entrants are more likely to enter the military if offered an incentive. Because enlistment incentives cut into the potential savings generated by implementation of lateral entry, it is preferable to rely on differences between military and civilian earnings within an occupation as an incentive for entry. Accordingly, we sought occupations whose civilian members earn less than their military counterparts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the goals and criteria described above, we analyzed occupations for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. We identified four possible candidate occupations for lateral entry. However, concerns about the existence of strong civilian counterparts, the reliability of civilian earnings data, and the stability of external labor supply lead us to conclude that pursuing a policy of large-scale lateral entry into even those four occupations does not show promise.

Because expanded use of lateral entry programs for non-prior-service personnel is unlikely to be successful in reducing training costs on a meaningful scale without introducing serious force management risks, we suggest a shift in focus to lateral entry of prior-service personnel, both active-duty and reserve component. A strategy emphasizing expansion of prior-service lateral entry would minimize cultural disruption, avoid training costs, and amortize costs already incurred over a longer career length.

We also recommend against the initiation of new pilot studies or programs in the near term. We suggest leaving ACASP and DPEP

intact. Though they both operate with a very low profile, neither carries administrative costs and neither causes any significant disruption, and planned reviews of the programs might lead to improvements. If the goals of filling personnel gaps or expanding recruiting markets advance in priority, decisionmakers should consider improving and enhancing these established, but little-used, programs.