

# Army Reducing Its Numbers in Face of Recruiting Difficulties

[Kristina Wong](#) 30 Mar 2022



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The Army this week admitted it was having problems recruiting and announced an unprecedented reduction in its numbers that would shrink the active duty Army to its smallest size since World War II.

“We’re facing, obviously, some challenging conditions in terms of our

ability to recruit and attract talent," Under Secretary of the Army Gabe Camarillo said at [a press conference](#) on Monday.

Camarillo blamed a "very tight labor market" for the Army's recruiting woes.

"What we're just seeing is given the particular conditions of a very tight labor market, our ability to meet all of our projected recruiting goals were a little bit challenged in FY '22 and FY '23," he said.

Camarillo said the Army's end strength, or total number of forces, would go from 485,000 soldiers currently to 476,000 in fiscal year 2022, which ends in September, and further down to 473,000 in fiscal year 2023.

He said the Army decided on reducing its recruitment goals instead of lowering standards.

"We made the assessment that we would not want to adjust our specific criteria for quality," he said. "And so, we made the decision to just temporarily reduce end strength, as opposed to lowering our standards."

He added that the Army hoped to build back its numbers over the next five years.

"We don't anticipate that it is a lasting change," Camarillo said. "It is something that we hope to bring back up over the course of the fight up. And it's something that we certainly think is reflective of what we hope to be transient conditions in the labor market."

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Thomas Spoehr, director of the Heritage

Foundation's Center for National Defense, called the situation unprecedented.

"The Army has not faced such recruiting headwinds in the last 30 years. I am unaware of a situation where the Army has cut its end strength in response to a negative recruiting outlook," he said.

Spoehr also attributed the decision to the Biden Administration keeping the Army budget below inflation.

"If the Biden administration was not holding the Army's budget below the level of inflation, I am not sure they would have had to resort to cutting their end strength," he said.

The reduction would bring the Army to its smallest since 1940, according to [Military Times](#).

Spoehr said the Army's decision would make units less capable:

The Army has said that rather than reduce the number of units, they will instead man units at a lower level. So, the Army's companies and battalions, rather than being manned at say 95-100%, with this end strength cut, the Army may only be able to fill them to a 90% level. That means less capable units.

The recruiting difficulties come as the Army has begun discharging soldiers not complying with the Biden administration's coronavirus vaccine mandate. More than 4,000 requested a religious exemption, but only two were granted, according to recent [Army statistics](#). An additional 2,735 soldiers have refused.

The difficulties are also despite the Army last year launching animated

recruitment advertisements that highlighted women, minorities, immigrants, and the LGBT community, as [previously reported by Breitbart News](#).

Spoehr called the Army's recruiting difficulties "a perfect storm, all hitting in 2022."

First, he said fewer and fewer individuals even qualify to enlist. He said:

The biggest disqualifying factors are obesity, fitness and mental health issues. This should not come as a surprise. Obesity in America, including among youth, continues to increase. More and more youth are being treated for mental health issues and being prescribed psychotropic drugs for treatment. Current numbers coming out of the Pentagon are that the percentage of individuals qualified to enlist without a waiver has dropped from 29% in 2016 to less than 25% in 2022.

Second, he said fewer and fewer individuals are interested in joining the military, also in part thanks to the Biden administration's botched Afghanistan withdrawal:

There are economic reasons for this, many companies are now offering more generous compensation packages that include college tuition to graduating high school seniors. There are lots of jobs available now. And over time American society has placed less and less value on the idea of public service. The disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan has also caused some to question our military and their competence.

Finally, he cited the perception that the military is becoming "woke."

“There is a sense among the American public that the military is becoming increasingly political and that topics such as race and gender equity, critical race theory, and wokeism in general are commanding more attention, at the cost of readiness,” he said.

Public polls have backed up that assessment. Earlier this year, [a Gallup poll showed](#) that the public view of military leaders has dropped, and [a Ronald Reagan Institute poll](#) last year showed that high confidence in the military has dropped.

Spoehr added: “I should note that it is my assessment that for the first time ever, it may turn out that none of the military services will make their recruiting goals for 2022. The Air Force in particular is sounding the alarm.”

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