

Organizations Responsible for Recruiting and Accessions in the U.S. Military

——Marking the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the JSDF Provincial Cooperation Offices

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Introduction

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) Provincial Cooperation Offices (PCOs), which were reorganized from the former Provincial Liaison Offices on July 31, 2006. The PCOs, which are responsible for the recruiting and accession of SDF uniformed personnel, have been confronted with considerable challenges amid today's severe recruiting environment¹. The number of SDF uniformed personnel recruited in fiscal year 2025 increased by 1,453 (14.9%) from the previous fiscal year to 11,177. However, the achievement rate against the recruitment target remained at only 72%, indicating that the recruiting environment remains highly challenging². Turning to the U.S. military, its active-component recruiting and accession results have changed considerably over the past several years (see Table). In FY2023, for example, the overall goal was 159,569, accessions numbered 133,975, and the overall achievement rate was 83.96%, the lowest since the introduction of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. In the following FY2024, however, the overall achievement rate improved to 97.00%, and in FY2025 it exceeded 100%³.

Table. Recent U.S. Military Recruiting and Accession Results

FY		Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Space Force	Total
2022	Target	60,000	33,400	26,600	26,196	521	148,717
	Accessions	44,901	33,442	28,608	26,196	532	133,679
	Achievement Rate	74.84%	100.13%	100.03%	100.00%	102.11%	89.89%
2023	Target	65,500	37,700	28,900	26,977	492	159,569
	Accessions	50,181	30,236	28,921	24,100	537	133,975
	Achievement Rate	76.61%	80.20%	100.07%	89.34%	109.15%	83.96%
2024	Target	55,000	40,600	27,500	27,200	704	151,004
	Accessions	55,150	35,804	27,500	7,303	716	146,473
	Achievement Rate	100.27%	88.19%	100.00%	100.38%	101.70%	97.00%
2025	Target	61,000	40,600	26,600	30,100	796	159,096
	Accessions	62,050	44,096	26,600	30,166	819	163,731
	Achievement Rate	101.72%	108.61%	100.00%	100.22%	102.89%	102.91%

Source: Prepared by the author based on press releases issued by the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, <https://prhome.war.gov/M-RA/Inside-M-RA/MPP/PR/>

This paper examines the kinds of organizations the U.S. military has established, and the extent of the resources it has committed, in order to adapt appropriately to changes in the recruiting environment and secure the personnel it requires. Although the scale of operations differs, this may provide a useful point of reference for considering the organization and operation of the recruiting and accession organizations of the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces, exemplified by the PCOs.

Organization and Structure

- Division of Responsibility for Recruiting: The Secretary of War and the Secretaries of the Military Departments

Responsibility and authority for U.S. military recruiting are assigned, under Title 10 of the United States Code, to the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force⁴. The Secretary concerned shall conduct intensive recruiting

campaigns to obtain enlistments in the Regular Army, Regular Navy, Regular Air Force, Regular Marine Corps, and Regular Coast Guard and the Space Force. The Secretary of War (SOW) shall act on a continuing basis to enhance the effectiveness of recruitment programs of the Department of War (DoW) (including programs conducted jointly and programs conducted by the separate armed forces) through an aggressive program of advertising and market research targeted at prospective recruits for the armed forces and those who may influence prospective recruits⁵.

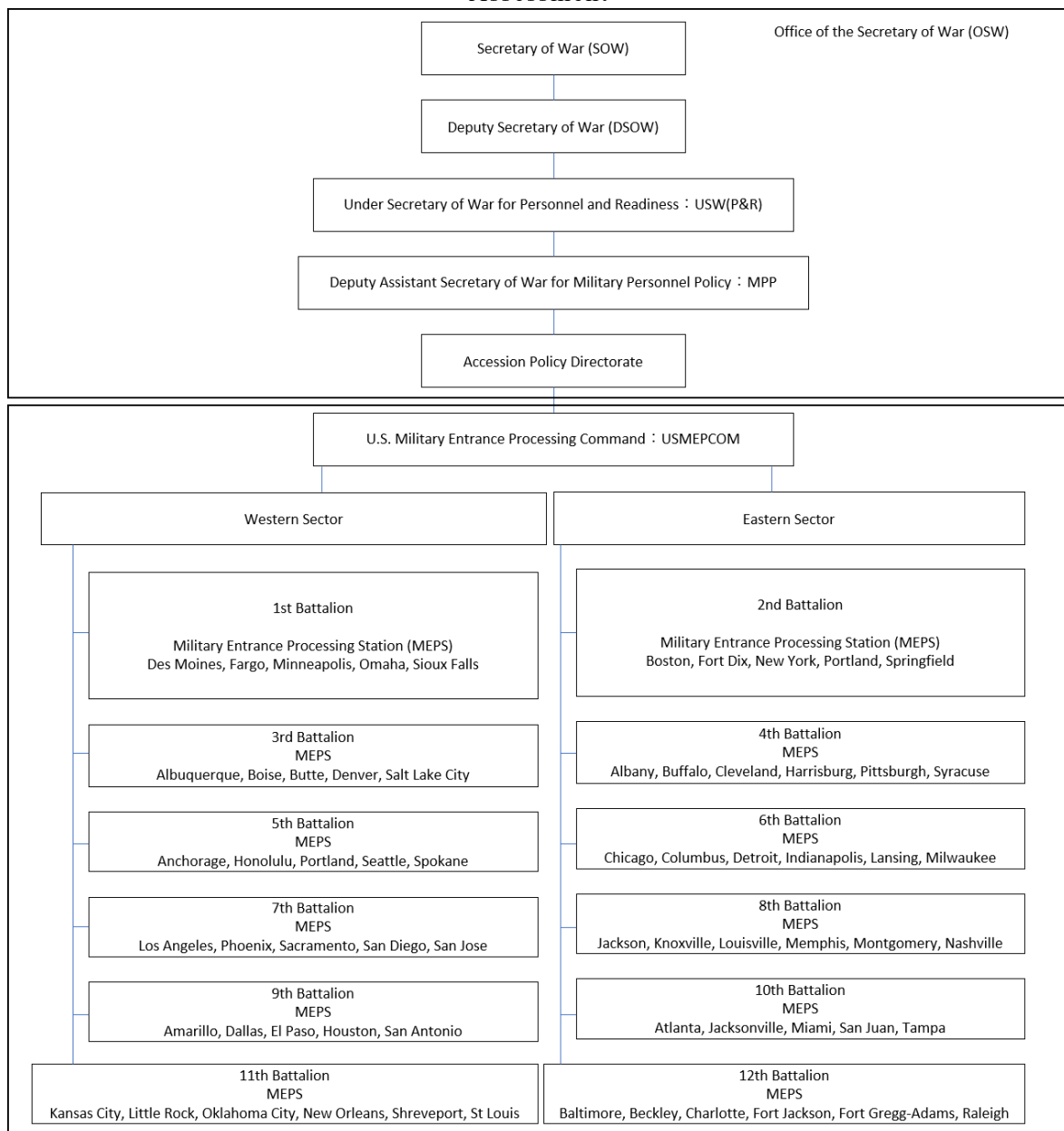
- Recruiting Policy and Applicant Assessment: The Office of the Secretary of War and the Military Entrance Processing Command

Within the Office of the Secretary of War (OSW), the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) serves under the SOW and the Deputy Secretary of War (DSOW)⁶. USW(P&R) shall develop policies, plans, and programs relating to the full range of personnel matters, including recruitment, of all DoW military and civilian personnel⁷. Reporting to USW(P&R) is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Military Personnel Policy (MPP), under whose authority the Accession Policy Directorate is established. The Accession Policy Directorate supports and advises the USW(P&R) on policies and programs for recruiting and accessing officer and enlisted personnel. The directorate also provides guidance and manages enlistment standards, development and use of screening tools, ensures recruiter access to high schools and colleges, and analyzes recruiting resources. Additionally, it oversees the US Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) and works to sustain the All-Volunteer Force⁸.

USMEPCOM is a joint command that evaluates enlistment applicants by applying established DoW standards, and its headquarters is located in North Chicago, Illinois⁹. Its area of responsibility is divided into Eastern and Western Sectors, each of which oversees six battalions; each battalion, in turn, exercises command and control over five or six

Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS), for a total of 65 MEPS¹⁰. In terms of personnel, the Eastern Sector alone has more than 1,300 staff across its 34 MEPS¹¹. The organizations described above, responsible for U.S. military recruiting policy and applicant assessment, are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Organizations Responsible for U.S. Military Recruiting Policy and Applicant Assessment



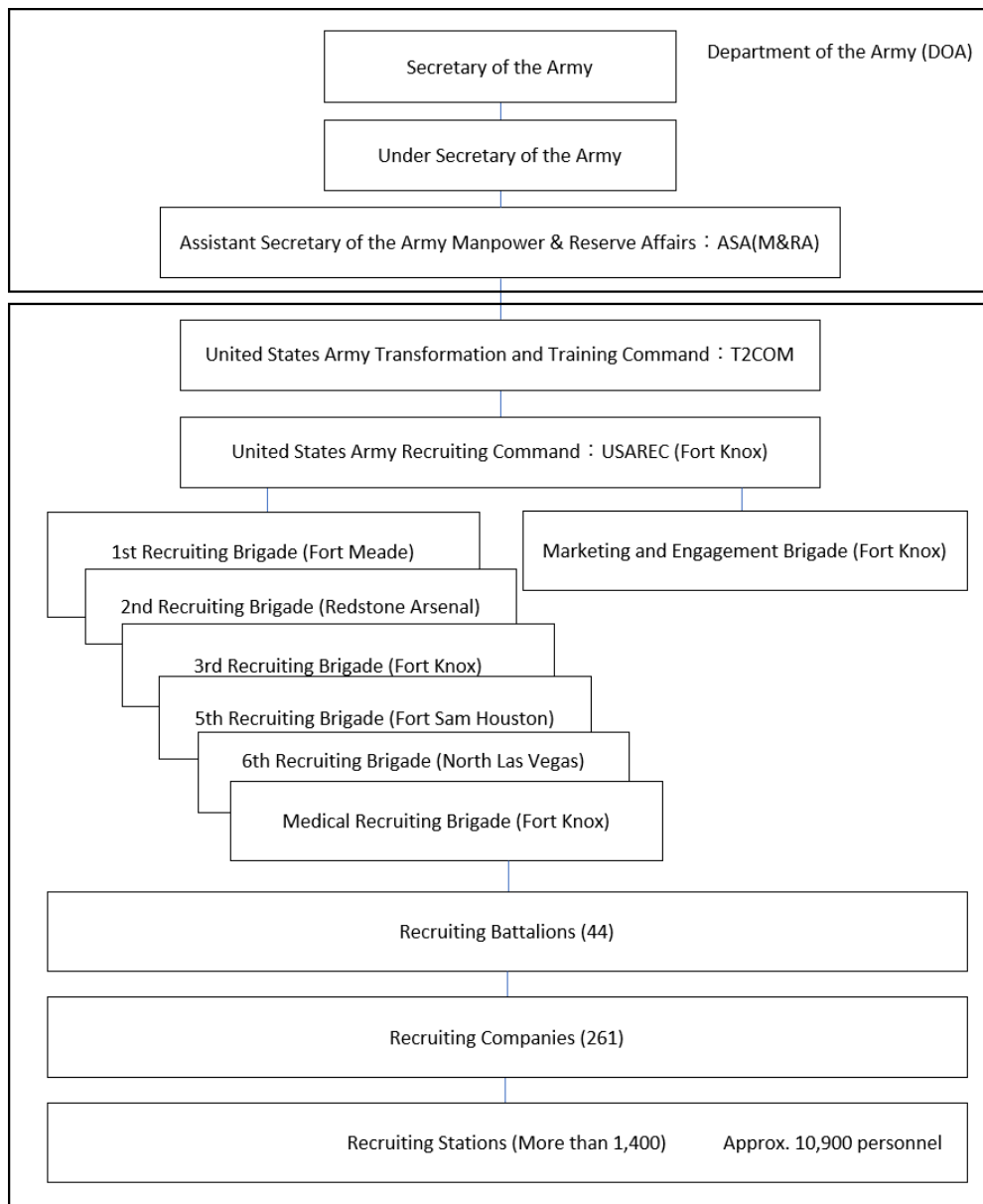
Prepared by the author based on information obtained from the official websites of the respective organizations and other sources.

- The Army's Recruiting Organization

Within the Department of the Army, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) [ASA(M&RA)] serves under the Secretary of the Army and oversees Army personnel and reserve affairs¹². As an Army command, the U.S. Army Transformation and Training Command (T2COM) is responsible for the overall enhancement of Army capabilities. Subordinate to T2COM is the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), the Army's dedicated recruiting organization¹³.

USAREC is responsible for securing personnel for both the Army's active and reserve components. Recruiting activities are conducted not only throughout the United States but also in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and at U.S. military installations in Germany and Asia. Its headquarters is located at Fort Knox, Kentucky, where more than 400 officers, enlisted personnel, and civilian employees provide command, control, and staff support to its recruiting forces. Subordinate to USAREC are the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th Recruiting Brigades, the Medical Recruiting Brigade, and the Marketing and Engagement Brigade. Each recruiting brigade oversees up to eight battalions, for a total of 44 recruiting battalions. Each region's recruiting battalion commands the recruiting companies within its area of responsibility, totaling 261 companies. These recruiting companies exercise tactical control over more than 1,400 recruiting offices staffed by approximately 10,900 recruiters. The Medical Recruiting Brigade is responsible for recruiting medical personnel as well as special-operations and chaplains, and comprises five medical recruiting battalions and a special operations recruiting battalion¹⁴. The organizations responsible for Army recruiting are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The U.S. Army's Recruiting Organization



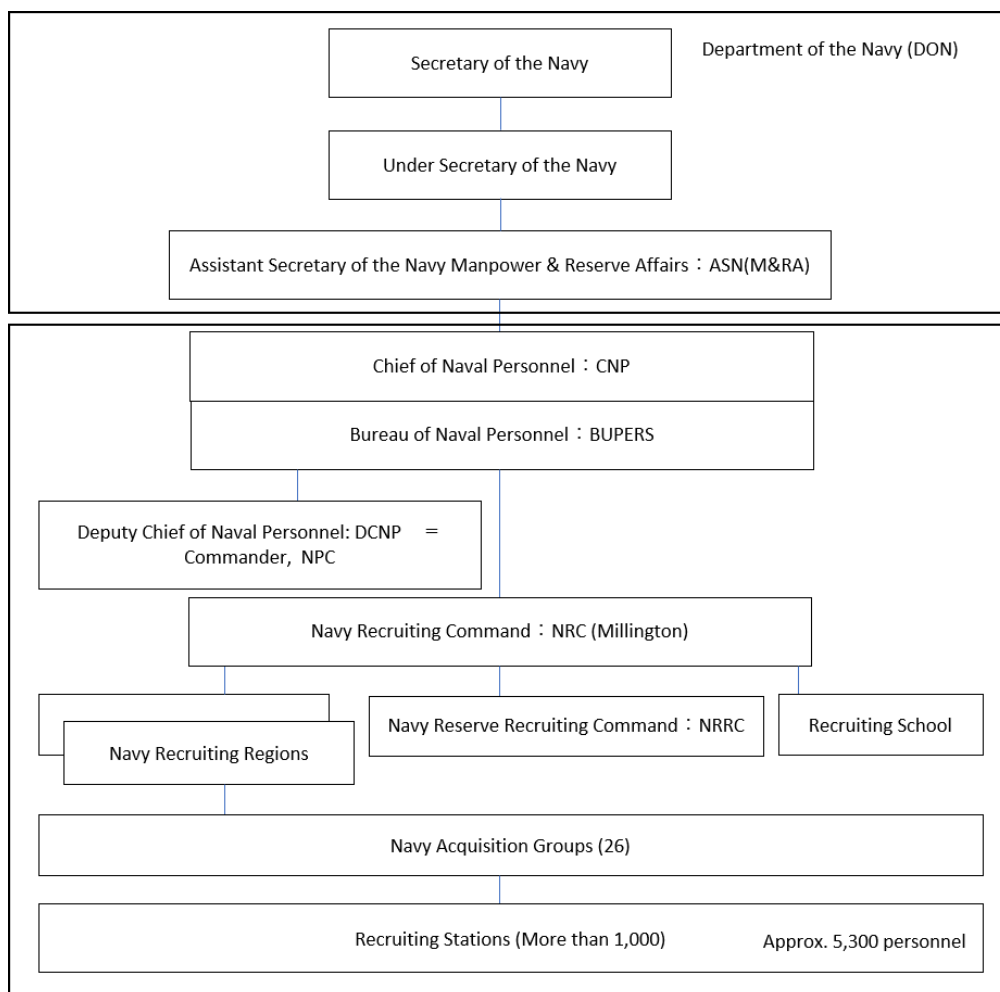
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● The Navy's Recruiting Organization

Within the Navy, the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) is headed by the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP)¹⁵. Under BUPERS is the Navy Personnel Command (NPC), commanded by the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel (DCNP), who also serves as its commander¹⁶.

The Navy's dedicated recruiting organization is the Navy Recruiting Command (NRC), headquartered in Millington, Tennessee. It is organized into two Navy Recruiting Regions and includes 26 Navy Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAGs), the Navy Reserve Recruiting Command (NRRC), and a Recruiting School. NRC comprises more than 6,000 active-duty, reserve, civilian, and contract personnel, of whom approximately 5,300 are assigned to more than 1,000 recruiting stations located throughout the United States as well as in Guam, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Japan, and Europe¹⁷. The organizations responsible for Navy recruiting are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The U.S. Navy's Recruiting Organization

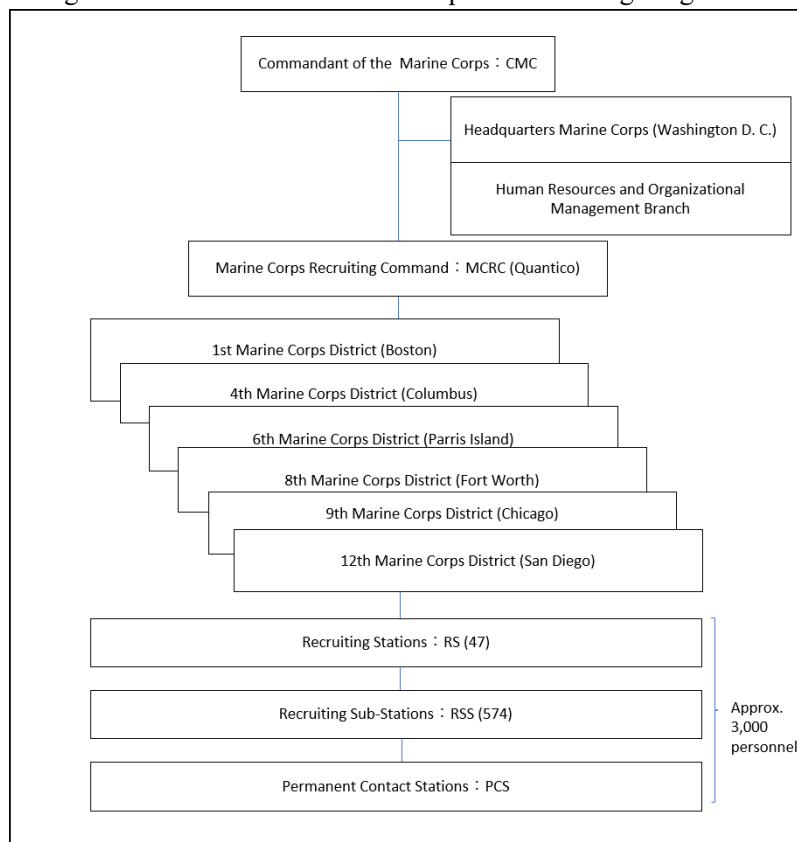


Prepared by the author based on information obtained from the official websites of the respective organizations and other sources.

● The Marine Corps' Recruiting Organization

Within the Headquarters Marine Corps, the Human Resources and Organizational Management Branch is responsible for personnel functions related to recruiting, including personnel assignment, recruiter development, and organizational management¹⁸. The Marine Corps' dedicated recruiting organization is the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), headquartered at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. Its area of responsibility is organized into six Marine Corps Districts. Subordinate to these districts are 47 Recruiting Stations (RS), beneath which are 574 Recruiting Sub-Stations (RSS). Some RSSs also maintain Permanent Contact Stations (PCS). Approximately 3,000 recruiters serve at these locations¹⁹. The organizations responsible for Marine Corps recruitment are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The U.S. Marine Corps' Recruiting Organization



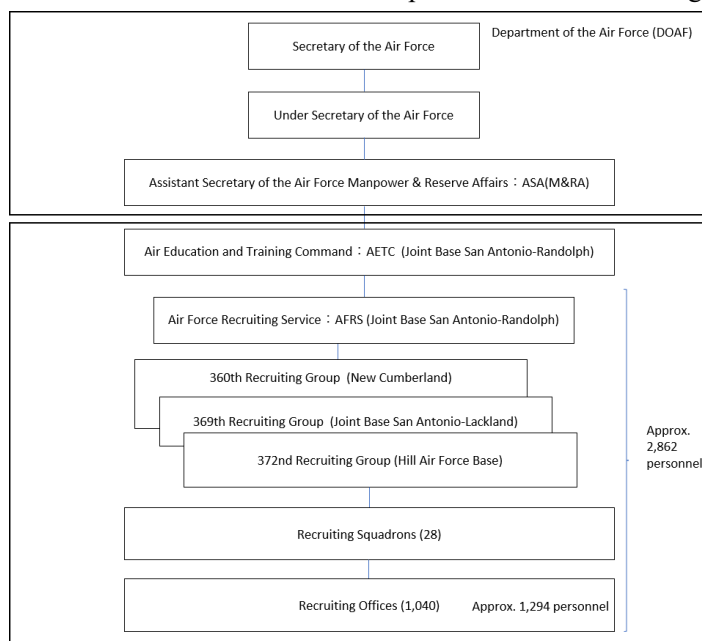
Prepared by the author based on information obtained from the official websites of the respective organizations and other sources.

- The Air Force and Space Force Recruiting Organization

Within the Air Force, the Air Education and Training Command (AETC) is established as a Major Command and is responsible for Air Force recruiting, training, and education²⁰.

The dedicated recruiting force for the Air Force and Space Force is the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS), a major subordinate unit of AETC. AFRS comprises 2,862 personnel, and its headquarters is located at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. Subordinate to AFRS are three Recruiting Groups, beneath which are 28 Recruiting Squadrons. Reporting to these squadrons are approximately 1,294 recruiters, each of whom has completed a seven-week course at the Air Force Recruiting School and is assigned to one of 1,040 recruiting offices located throughout the United States as well as in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Japan, Puerto Rico, and Guam²¹. The organizations responsible for Air Force and Space Force recruiting are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The U.S. Air Force and Space Force Recruiting Organization



Prepared by the author based on information obtained from the official websites of the respective organizations and other sources.

Budget Execution

Turning to U.S. military recruiting and accession expenditures, for example, net obligations for Recruiting and Advertising in FY2025 amounted to \$765,465,000 for the Army, \$282,090,000 for the Navy, \$231,422,000 for the Marine Corps, and \$197,422,000 for the Air Force, for a total of \$1,476,999,000. In addition, \$10,208,000 was obligated for the Air Force Reserve and \$48,286,000 for the Air National Guard, bringing the total to \$1,534,893,000. Furthermore, examining costs associated with accessions amounted to \$202,505,000 for the Army and \$7,752,000 for the Air Force, bringing the overall total to \$1,745,150,000²². Separately from these figures, USMEPCOM's FY2025 budget amounted to \$432,190,000²³.

Conclusion

As the foregoing discussion makes clear, the U.S. military has built a substantial organizational structure, staffed it with a substantial workforce, and committed an enormous budget to the recruiting and accession of personnel. It is not difficult to imagine that such an organization can respond flexibly and swiftly to changes in the recruiting environment, and that it is likely to function quite effectively in securing the personnel it requires. Turning back to Japan, and notwithstanding differences in overall scale, can it be said that the organization and budget of the recruiting and accession bodies of the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces, exemplified by the PCOs, are commensurate with the importance of their mission? In light of the continued decline in the population of recruiting-age cohorts driven by demographic aging and a declining birthrate, the time has

come to give further consideration to the future organization and management of Japan's recruiting and accession system.

(Manuscript completed July 1, 2026)

¹ E.g., Komaki Matsuda, "2-man-nin Tarinai...: Jieitai no Shinkokuka suru Hitode-busoku" [Twenty Thousand Short...: The Worsening Personnel Shortage in the Self-Defense Forces], *Chuo Koron*, July 18, 2025, <https://chuokoron.jp/politics/127097.html>; Mizuki Sato, "Jieitai no Teiin Sakugen e Kento Susumu: 'Boeiryoku Kyoka' Kakageru Naka, Tsuzuku Jin'in-busoku" [Study Underway to Reduce Self-Defense Force Personnel Ceilings as Manpower Shortage Persist despite Defense Buildup Efforts], *Asahi Shimbun*, March 27, 2026, <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASV3V43HYV3VUTFK00HM.html>; and others.

² Ministry of Defense, "Boei Daijin Kisha Kaiken" [Minister of Defense Press Conference], June 16, 2026, <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kishia/2026/0616a.html>; Ministry of Defense (Japan), "Jieikan-to no Jusoku/Saiyo Jokyo" [Status of Fill Rates and Accessions for SDF Personnel] (as of March 31, 2026), <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/profile/personnel-status/index.html>.

³ Press Releases, Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel & Readiness, <https://prhome.war.gov/M-RA/Inside-M-RA/MPP/PR/>

⁴ U.S Code Title 10, Section 7013, 8013, 9013. This Code uses the organizational and position titles, that predate the renaming of the U.S. Department of Defense to the Department of War.

⁵ U.S Code Title 10, Section 503.

⁶ "Office of the Secretary of War," U.S. Department of War, <https://www.war.gov/About/Office-of-the-Secretary-of-War/>.

⁷ Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) No. 5124.02, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), June 23, 2008, 2-3, <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/512402p.pdf>. This directive uses the organizational and position titles, as well as their abbreviations, that predate the renaming of the U.S. Department of Defense to the Department of War.

⁸ "About Military Personnel Policy," Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, <https://prhome.war.gov/M-RA/Inside-M-RA/MPP/About/>; "Accession Policy," Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, <https://prhome.war.gov/M-RA/Inside-M-RA/MPP/Accession-Policy/>.

⁹ "United States Military Entrance Processing Command," United States Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM), <https://www.mepcom.army.mil/About-Us/History/>.

¹⁰ "United States Military Entrance Processing Command, Eastern Sector Headquarters," USMEPCOM, <https://www.mepcom.army.mil/Sectors-Battalions-and-MEPS/Eastern-Sector/>; "United States Military Entrance Processing Command, Western Sector Headquarters," USMEPCOM, <https://www.mepcom.army.mil/Sectors-Battalions-and-MEPS/Western-Sector/>.

¹¹ "Annual Report 2025," United States Military Entrance Processing Command, https://www.mepcom.army.mil/Portals/112/Documents/Annual%20Report/Command%20Annual%20Report%202025_final%20online.pdf?ver=TID9KzYMVDXrH-9zDscAEA%3d%3d.

¹² U.S. Code, Title 10, sec. 7016. Corresponding positions exist in the other military departments as well: the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) [ASN(M&RA)] and the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) [ASAF(M&RA)]. U.S. Code, Title 10, secs. 8016, 9016.

¹³ "U.S. Army Transformation and Training Command," U.S. Army, <https://www.army.mil/t2com/?from=org>.

¹⁴ "About USAREC," U.S. Army Recruiting Command, <https://recruiting.army.mil/aboutUSAREC/>.

¹⁵ "BUPERS," MyNAVY HR, <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/About-MyNavy-HR/Commands/Navy-Personnel-Command/Organization/BUPERS/>.

¹⁶ "NPC Internal," MyNAVY HR, <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/About-MyNavy-HR/Commands/Navy-Personnel-Command/Organization/NPC-Internal/>.

¹⁷ "Navy Recruiting Facts and Statistics," Navy Recruiting Command, <https://www.cnrc.navy.mil/About/Navy-Recruiting-Facts-and-Statistics/>.

¹⁸ "Human Resources and Organizational Management Branch (ARH)," United States Marine Corps, <https://www.hrom.marines.mil/>.

¹⁹ "Marine Corps Recruiting Command," United States Marine Corps, <https://www.mcrc.marines.mil/>. For example, of the six Marine Corps Districts, the 1st Marine Corps District comprises eight Recruiting Stations, each with ten to fifteen Recruiting Sub-Stations, staffed by 350 personnel. "1st Marine Corps District," United States Marine Corps, <https://www.1stmcd.marines.mil/>.

²⁰ "Air Education and Training Command," U.S. Air Force, <https://www.aetc.af.mil/About-Us/>.

²¹ "Air Force Recruiting Service," U.S. Air Force, <https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/104565/air-force-recruiting-service/>.

²² *Operation and Maintenance Budget Execution Fourth Quarter Report for Fiscal Year 2025*, Department of War, September 2025, https://comptroller.war.gov/Portals/45/Documents/OM_Reports/FY2025/FY_2025_4th_quarter_execution.pdf.

²³ “Annual Report 2025,” USMEPCOM.

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