

# OPPORTUNITIES

in

# Military Careers

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## Military Careers

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**ADRIAN A. PARADIS**

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## FOREWORD

YOUNG AMERICAN MEN and women today have a constantly widening and impressive array of career opportunities awaiting them. As a nation, we can be proud of a bright and promising future for our rising generations.

Those future prospects attest to the importance of the professions described in this book. In an uncertain world, history teaches us that the accomplishments of free people must be protected. This lesson is most obvious in time of war or international crisis, but it also applies in times that appear tranquil. Every day Americans in all walks of life can go about their pursuits with confidence because of the contributions of their compatriots who have chosen to dedicate some or all of their professional lives to military service.

Our men and women in the armed forces serve in many capacities at many locations in the United States and around the world. They work in a spectrum of specialties that mirrors opportunities available in American society at large. Many serve in the military for only a few years and then move on to careers in the private sec-

tor that are enhanced by the training, experience, and maturity they have acquired. Others remain longer and make uniformed service their lifelong vocation. They follow many paths, but all share in the pride that comes with having done special work to serve their country and to guarantee a secure future for the generations to come.

I hope all readers of this book will carefully consider the challenging opportunities outlined in these pages. For those who choose to join our ranks, I know you will find life in military service rewarding in many ways.

William J. Crowe Jr.

Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

## INTRODUCTION

REGARDLESS OF WHERE you may be in school, college, or your early working years, if you are concerned about finding a challenging career, look no further—at least until you have reviewed the job prospects in this book.

After you consider the wealth of opportunities revealed here, you may well find the perfect career, making a further search unnecessary. Most of us take the military establishment for granted during peacetime, until an enemy threatens our nation's security; then we look to the men and women in the armed services to protect us and ward off possible harm. This kind of insurance in today's world calls for a vast globe-encircling organization, some of which is on the alert every moment of every hour, every day. It requires an incredibly large number of highly trained personnel in occupations as diverse as piloting airplanes, operating advanced electronic equipment, or manning a radar range-finder, to lesser skilled occupations like carpentry, painting, or cooking. Take your

pick from the hundreds of career possibilities, which are all yours for the choosing with free training at Uncle Sam's expense.

Before we proceed further, let us be the first to admit that a career in the military—no matter what it may be—is not for everyone. For various reasons, some young men and women do not want any connection to the armed forces, although they may readily acknowledge their necessity when our country is attacked. However, a large part of the population understands both the importance of the military establishment and the advantages it offers those seeking meaningful careers.

In the civilian world there are few, if any, employment opportunities where you can step into a paying job and receive training. If you have a high school diploma, there are countless opportunities for job training leading to a useful skill that is vital to the service you have chosen and is also valuable later in the outside world, when you retire or elect to leave the military.

The military sometimes describes itself as America's oldest company. In an overview that was published on its official website, <http://www.defenselink.mil>, the Pentagon says: ". . . if you look at us in business terms, many would say we are not only America's largest company, but its busiest and most successful."

Unlike a business operation, though, the Defense Department is not subject to buyouts, leverages, or the whims of the economy. The military is here to stay—and so are its jobs. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the military has intensified its traditional national defense mission, augmenting its capabilities in a number of areas, such as homeland security and defending against weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, the military has continued its humanitarian missions, responding to natural disasters both at home and abroad. None of these missions can be completed with-

out people—which the military employs in huge numbers. In early 2005 the Pentagon reported 1.4 million people on active duty, with another 1.2 million serving in the National Guard and Reserve forces.

The military also offers a number of civilian positions, usually in administrative support jobs. These are similar to openings in private industry, where you must have already acquired the necessary office or other skills to qualify. However, as a civilian employee, you are not entitled to the various services and materials, such as free food, clothing, shelter, and educational and recreational opportunities, that are made available to members of the military.

Because each service offers a great number of job opportunities, it is wise to talk to the nearest recruiting personnel of the services that interest you. They can tell you what openings are available. Keep in mind, however, that it may be necessary to select a second or third job choice should there be nothing in the area you prefer. That is because the employment needs of each service fluctuate as personnel retire or the need for the skill you envision learning is no longer required.

This book will introduce you to each of the four principal services: the Navy, the Marines, the Army, and the Air Force. The order of their appearance was determined by drawing lots, since they are of equal importance to the overall military establishment. The U.S. Coast Guard follows the armed services because it is only during wartime that the Coast Guard becomes an active military organization; its normal responsibilities are of a more peacetime nature. Nevertheless, it is also an important service that offers numerous challenging career opportunities.

Following our introduction to each of the five services, we will discuss several areas of concern to every career-minded person: the



advantages and disadvantages of military service, responsibilities assumed, educational opportunities for officer candidates, and related civilian openings. Finally, in the Appendixes, you will find information about military career fields; the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications of each; and examples of related civilian jobs.

If the prospect of earning while learning is music to your ears, read ahead and discover for yourself what career possibilities can be yours.

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## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARMED FORCES

IF THE U.S. military were a business, it would be the largest, busiest, and oldest company in America. With roots reaching back to pre-Revolutionary times, the military has operated steadily since 1775.

Like all companies, the American military establishment has evolved over time. At first it consisted of three services: the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps. In 1789 the military branches operated under direction of the War Department. In 1947 a new service—the Air Force—split off from the Army. The War Department became the Department of the Army, and the three main services—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—were placed under the control of a newly created secretary of defense. In 1949 the secretary was placed at the helm of a newly formed Department of Defense, with headquarters at the Pentagon.

Today the military is similar to a conglomerate spanning the globe. The American armed forces operate in every time zone and

in more than 145 countries around the world. It has an almost incomprehensibly large budget: three-hundred seventy-one *billion* dollars.

Unlike any other company in America, the military is officially assigned a unique responsibility: national defense. This includes fighting wars, counterterrorism, disaster relief, and even humanitarian aid. The overall mission is a vital and unequaled assignment—one that is performed by people.

Who are the people in the military? In October 2001, shortly after the tragic events of September 11, defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld described these people while delivering a message to the troops. In his message, Secretary Rumsfeld said, "You are the sharp sword of freedom."

This does not mean that every member of the armed forces is a warrior. In fact, 80 percent of all military personnel serve in non-combat jobs. They do, however, support those personnel who do the actual fighting. And as any soldier or sailor or airman will affirm, no gun can fire without bullets delivered by a supply officer; no troop can function without food provided by cooks; and no truck can operate without the help of a skilled mechanic. In other words, all military jobs are important.

The jobs are also in plentiful supply. The services currently operate more than three hundred types of schools that offer full-time and part-time training as well as opportunities in more than forty-one hundred military job specialties. Significantly, 88 percent of those jobs have direct civilian counterparts. This means that a thoughtful job seeker would do well to consider the military; not only does the military serve an important purpose to the nation, but it also prepares its members for successful careers both within the armed forces and subsequent civilian life.

The following chapters will address the various military services and related matters in greater depth. But first, let's take a look at some pertinent information, starting with how the armed forces are organized.

## **Organization of the Armed Forces**

The military is run by a complex amalgam of uniformed officers and civilian government officials. The commander-in-chief is the president of the United States. On a broad scale, the president makes major decisions on how to use the armed forces. These decisions are funded and approved (or not approved) by Congress. A primary example would be the decision to go to war.

The National Command Authority, which consists of the president and the secretary of defense, supervises military operations. Does this mean that the president and the secretary of defense are personally involved in every military mission? No. They delegate authority through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who lead the individual services. This authority then passes through the leaders of the unified multiservice command and downward through the services and their various commands and bases and units.

Most military personnel have little, if any, day-to-day dealings with high-ranking commanders. Most personnel function only within their units, according to their particular service. Although all services share the job of national defense, each approaches the task in a distinct way.

The Army defends the landmass of the United States, along with those of its territories, commonwealths, and possessions. It conducts ground war abroad, fighting in battles and holding territory. It operates in some fifty countries.

The Navy maintains combat-ready seagoing forces that both wage war and deter foreign aggression. It maintains freedom of the seas. It operates in and near hostile waters, ready to provide near-instantaneous combat power, should the need arise. Additionally, the Navy participates in international humanitarian relief efforts.

The Marine Corps is an expeditionary combat force attached to the Navy. It operates via land, air, and sea.

The Air Force performs airborne combat and peacekeeping roles in hot spots around the world. It also takes part in international humanitarian relief.

The Coast Guard enforces federal maritime laws, rescues distressed vessels and aircraft at sea, and prevents smuggling. Normally, the Coast Guard is part of the Transportation Department; however, during war, it operates under the Navy.

## People Power

All four services combine to create a huge national defense operation. While it is true that the United States defends itself with a dazzling array of technology and machinery, it is also true that the equipment runs on people power.

The military has about 1.4 million people on active duty, with an additional 1.2 million belonging to National Guard and Reserve forces. Another 654,000 or so civilians also are employed by the military in various functions.

The military is known for its high standards. More than half of the enlisted force has had at least some college experience. The military encourages its members to pursue academic goals and has programs in place to help its members achieve those goals—in some cases, contributing as much as \$50,000 in tuition to an individual.



Physical development is also important. Military personnel are encouraged to keep their bodies strong and healthy. Although physical development is important, the armed forces do not expect all members to enter the service in peak athletic form. Potential recruits sometimes fear that physical standards are so high that they will not be able to complete the rigorous basic recruit training. The Pentagon assures us, though, that most young people can meet the standards; approximately 90 percent of new recruits are able to complete the basic training regimen.

## The Armed Forces and You

Before pursuing a stint in the armed forces any further, think about what it means to take the military oath of allegiance. That oath reads as follows:

I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.

The military takes this oath seriously and expects you to do the same. If you join one of the services, your first obligation is to become a useful, loyal, and enthusiastic member of that service and give it everything you can during peacetime and wartime. You also will sign a promise that obliges you to complete your term of service. Your commitment will mean that you personally may wind up standing between America and any enemy. This is serious stuff. You should consider it carefully and understand what joining means before you apply for enlistment or a commission. Your commitment