THE U.S. MILITARY

THE FRAME
In the decade since 9/11, America’s highly-capable volunteer military has faced an unprecedented series of global challenges. Ten years of sustained combat have taken a toll on the Armed Services, our servicemembers, and their families. Meanwhile, the global security environment has continued to evolve and the military has kept pace. From counterterrorism operations around the globe, to disaster response, to search and rescue operations, our men and women in uniform have proven themselves time and again.

Few of our national security challenges can be met with military might alone. 21st century national security challenges demand a team approach, coupling defense efforts with development assistance, diplomacy, and support for emerging democracies. As our military leaders adapt to a changing world, they rely more on robust civilian agencies to ensure success.

If you only read one thing...

KEY ISSUES:
- Values are a matter of life and death in the U.S. military.
- The U.S. military is apolitical.
- The U.S. military is highly educated and representative of the U.S. population.
- The U.S. military does not choose wars; only civilian leaders have that power.
MILITARY VALUES

Military values are a matter of life and death. The military places a high premium on values, and for good reason: survival and success on the battlefield depends upon trust. In the civilian world, not showing up to an appointment on time is annoying. In a combat environment, a similar lapse can cost lives.

Progressives share many values with the U.S. Military. The military and progressives share a fierce egalitarianism and commitment to merit-based advancement, as well as a feeling that the privileged should help the underprivileged. Officers, for instance, eat after those under their command. Both also share a strong sense of community. ‘Leave No Man Behind’ is a central pillar of battlefield leadership. Finally, progressives and the military believe decision-making should be based on what is right, not what is expedient.

Progressives and the military have achieved important successes working together. The Counterinsurgency Field Manual integrated military planning with civilian priorities, laying the groundwork for the surge strategy in Iraq. The GI Bill helps veterans get an education, buy a home, and set themselves up for success after their service. The original GI Bill created the modern middle class after World War II, and the new post-9/11 GI Bill offers similar opportunities to today’s veterans.

Both achievements were born through collaboration between progressives and the military. These initiatives are of paramount importance in guiding today’s wars and taking care of today’s veterans.
The military stays out of politics. The military is fiercely apolitical. By law, individuals in uniform may not appear at political events and servicemembers may not endorse candidates. This reflects and safeguards a deep institutional commitment to civilian control of the military, and is a value most military personnel hold sacred. When servicemembers take their oath, they swear their allegiance to the Constitution, not to a particular party or President.

The military does not always vote Republican. In the 2008 Presidential Election, the majority of servicemembers under the age of 60 voted for President Obama. Because of a greater number of seniors who are veterans, Senator McCain received more votes from veterans and servicemembers overall (55%-45%). But the military is politically mixed and becoming more so every day.

The military is not necessarily militaristic. Servicemembers are the first to see the real costs of war, and they—and their families—bear the brunt of the conflict. But, it’s complicated. Servicemembers are often promoted during periods of war, and war provides servicemembers with the opportunity to apply their hard-won skills and expertise.
WHO SERVES IN TODAY’S MILITARY

The military is comprised of some of the most able people in America. Only 25 percent of the population between 17 and 24 are eligible to enlist; 75 percent are disqualified due to lack of physical fitness, failure to graduate high school, or a criminal record.

The military is more educated than the general population. Enlisted servicemembers must graduate from high school and 98 percent have a degree; nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population does not. Officers must have a college degree, an achievement that less than one-third of Americans have earned.

Getting this wrong can be costly. In 2006, John Kerry infamously said “Education—if you make the most of it and you study hard and you do your homework, and you make an effort to be smart, you can do well. If you don’t, you get stuck in Iraq.” Do not make the same mistake.

The military is ethnically representative of the U.S. population, and most recruits come from the middle class. African Americans are slightly over-represented and Latinos are slightly underrepresented but the numbers are broadly similar to the U.S. population among officers and enlisted servicemembers.

Most members of the military do not want a return to the draft; they want to be a professional, volunteer force. Reinstituting a draft is often seen by civilians as a way of leveling American society and creating a common, bonding experience between the military and civilians. But most members of the professional military do not want people serving with them who do not want to be there—it endangers their lives.
The military is under civilian control. The President, who serves as the Commander-in-Chief, decides—with Congress—which wars we enter, sets military strategy, and determines the number of troops.

The Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force are civilians in charge of preparation. They ensure each service has the budget, necessary manpower, training, and equipment to fight and win wars.

Combatant Commanders are military officers who are in charge of military operations in geographic areas, and some specialty areas such as Cyber Command and Special Operations Command. They take their orders from the President and the Secretary of Defense, collectively known as “National Command Authority.”

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF ARE THE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED MILITARY, BUT THEY DO NOT COMMAND FORCES. They advise the president; they do not command operations. And they are not in the “chain of command.”
**THE BURDEN OF COMMAND: RANK & UNIT SIZE**

There are 2 types of servicemembers: Enlisted personnel and Commissioned Officers.

**Commissioned Officers command and manage.** They give the orders, and are referred to as “sir” or “ma’am.” To become an officer, a servicemember must earn a bachelor’s degree and graduate from a Service Academy, an Officer Candidate School or complete an ROTC program.

As officers advance in rank, they assume responsibility for larger units. The difference between a Lieutenant and a Lieutenant Colonel is responsibility for about 950 more lives.

**Enlisted personnel “join up” and execute tasks.** They enter the military, gaining specialized skills through training and experience. They execute orders and get the job done on the ground. They should not be referred to as “sir” or “ma’am.” They should be addressed by rank and last name. Enlisted servicemembers can become Non-Commissioned Officers, such as Sergeants, and take on additional leadership and management roles. A Sergeant might be thirty years older than a newly commissioned Lieutenant, but would still be outranked by the officer. The lowest ranking officer outranks the highest ranking enlisted servicemember, but senior enlisted leaders are afforded tremendous respect by even the highest-ranking officers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit (Army)</th>
<th>Led By</th>
<th># Troops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Major General</td>
<td>15-18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Brigade or Marine Regiment</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>2,500-4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battalion</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>665-1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>130-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platoon</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>35-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squad</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>9-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Team</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>3-4</td>
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THE MILITARY SERVICES

Each service has its own mandate. The Army is built to execute large-scale and long-term ground operations. The Air Force controls air and space operations and is in charge of two-thirds of our nuclear triad (ballistic missiles and bombers). The Navy provides naval security, ensures sea transport, and allows for U.S. force projection. The Navy also controls the third leg of the nuclear triad (nuclear submarines). The Marines are a rapid deployment amphibious force. Each of the services also contributes elite forces to the Special Operations community.

The Coast Guard is also a uniformed service and is considered a part of our nation’s military. However, since 2005, the Coast Guard has fallen under the Department of Homeland Security except when called to war, at which point they fall within the Navy.

Not all military personnel are ‘soldiers.’ Using the correct terminology is important to gaining respect. When referring to members of different services, use ‘servicemembers’ or ‘troops.’ Soldiers serve in the Army. Sailors populate the Navy. The Airforce has Airmen, and the Coast Guard has coastguardsmen—regardless of gender. Marines are called Marines.

Common Error

NOT ALL PERSONNEL ARE ‘SOLDIERS’:
- Army = soldier
- Navy = sailor
- Marines = Marine
- Air Force = airman
- Coast Guard = coastguardsman

When in doubt, use ‘servicemember’ or ‘troops.’
The Reserves and the National Guard. The National Guard is organized by individual states to train and prepare for unforeseen circumstances and mobilize if needed during war. While the Governor controls each state’s National Guard, units can be federalized (placed under Presidential control) and deployed upon request, such as after September 11.

Army and Air Force Reserves are run by the federal government. They consist of regular Americans who agree to train one weekend a month and two full weeks a year, with the possibility of being ‘activated’ for longer periods of service when needed.

However, the Goldwater-Nichols (1986) reforms made the Reserves responsible for key duties, such as working with local governments. This was deliberately done to ensure that reserves would be deployed when the nation went to war. At the time, policymakers intended for this to ensure that wars could not be fought without real public support, since calling on the Reserves directly impacts local communities. Many members of the Reserves also work in local police, fire, and other emergency responder forces. When they are deployed as part of a war, local communities must cope with depleted ranks at home.

Since 2001, Reserves have served a great deal: during the surge in Iraq, for instance, Reserves comprised 28 percent of all U.S. forces. However, there are reserve units in many areas that lack VA services, so many reservists returned to towns ill-equipped to help them reintegrate. The National Guard has also seen higher rates of federalization and deployment since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, causing real complications during crises at home. During Hurricane Katrina, for instance, the Mississippi National Guard was deployed to Iraq leaving little help for the post-Hurricane operations at home.
WHERE IS OUR MILITARY DEPLOYED?

The military is deployed worldwide—not only in Afghanistan. The U.S. military has a truly global presence, with American military personnel and equipment deployed on every continent, on every one of the world’s oceans, and in the skies and space above every area of the globe.

In general, American military forces are deployed abroad for one of five reasons:

Treaty obligations. These can be long-standing, as is the case with Germany.

Cement and safeguard alliances. For example, U.S. forces are deployed to Eastern Europe to shore up our relationships there.

Forward deployment to ensure regional stability and rapidly respond to threats. For example, forward deployed forces in Japan and on Guam are able to rapidly counter possible North Korean aggression.

Ongoing training, stability and support operations. Contemporary examples include operations to fight terrorism or train local units in the Philippines, Indonesia and the Horn of Africa. Often, these missions don’t make the headlines.

Combat operations. Areas where we are actively engaged in war.
MILITARY CONTRACTORS

The number of contractors is increasing, but not all of this is negative. While contracting has risen precipitously since the Bosnian Wars of the 1990s, 87 percent of military contractors perform non-security related tasks such as cooking and cleaning. When America ended the draft, it decided to assign military members war-fighting duties and move duties such as preparing food or cleaning barracks to contractors. It makes sense to hire locals and third-party nationals to perform these functions. However, the use of military contractors to perform security operations is controversial and problematic.

Security contractors comprise six percent of the contracting force and translators comprise an additional seven percent. It may not make sense to outsource these strategic functions. Individuals charged with the use of force, interrogation, or Embassy security for our diplomats should fall under the chain of command and be subject to the same legal rules as our military forces. And while there are advantages to outsourcing translation duties to locals who know the language best, there is no substitute for trained and proficient linguists in the military services.