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# Job Opportunities in the Armed Forces

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## Significant Points

- Some training and duty assignments are hazardous, even in peacetime; hours and working conditions can be arduous and vary substantially, and personnel must strictly conform to military rules at all times.
- Requirements vary by branch of service, but enlisted personnel need at least a high school diploma or its equivalent while officers need a bachelor's or graduate degree.
- Opportunities should be excellent in all branches of the Armed Forces for applicants who meet designated standards.
- Military personnel are eligible for retirement after 20 years of service.

## Nature of the Work

Maintaining a strong national defense requires workers who can do such diverse tasks as run a hospital, command a tank, program a computer system, operate a nuclear reactor, or repair and maintain a helicopter. The military provides training and work experience in these and many other fields for more than 2.4 million people. More than 1.4 million people serve in the active Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, and more than 1.0 million serve in their Reserve components and the Air and Army National Guard. (The Coast Guard, which also is discussed in this *Handbook* statement, is part of the Department of Homeland Security.)

The military distinguishes between enlisted and officer careers. Enlisted personnel, who make up about 82 percent of the Armed Forces, carry out the fundamental operations of the



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military in combat, administration, construction, engineering, healthcare, human services, and other areas. Officers, who make up the remaining 18 percent of the Armed Forces, are the leaders of the military, supervising and managing activities in every occupational specialty.

The sections that follow discuss the major occupational groups for enlisted personnel and officers.

**Enlisted occupational groups.** Administrative careers include a wide variety of positions. The military must keep accurate information for planning and managing its operations. Both paper and electronic records are kept on personnel and on equipment, funds, supplies, and all other aspects of the military. Administrative personnel record information, prepare reports, maintain files, and review information to assist military officers. Personnel may work in a specialized area, such as finance, accounting, legal affairs, maintenance, supply, or transportation.

Combat specialty occupations include enlisted specialties, such as infantry, artillery, and Special Forces, whose members operate weapons or execute special missions during combat. People in these occupations normally specialize by type of weapon system or combat operation. They maneuver against enemy forces and positions, and fire artillery, guns, mortars, and missiles to destroy enemy positions. They also may operate tanks and amphibious assault vehicles in combat or on scouting missions. When the military has especially difficult or specialized missions to perform, it calls upon Special Forces teams. These elite combat forces maintain a constant state of readiness to strike anywhere in the world on a moment's notice. Team members from the Special Forces conduct offensive raids, demolitions, intelligence, search-and-rescue missions, and other operations from aboard aircraft, helicopters, ships, or submarines.

Construction occupations in the military include personnel who build or repair buildings, airfields, bridges, foundations, dams, bunkers, and the electrical and plumbing components of these structures. Personnel in construction occupations operate bulldozers, cranes, graders, and other heavy equipment. Construction specialists also may work with engineers and other building specialists as part of military construction teams. Some personnel specialize in areas such as plumbing or electrical wiring. Plumbers and pipefitters install and repair the plumbing and pipe systems needed in buildings and on aircraft and ships. Building electricians install and repair electrical-wiring systems in offices, airplane hangars, and other buildings on military bases.

Electronic and electrical equipment repair personnel repair and maintain electronic and electrical equipment used in the military. Repairers normally specialize by type of equipment, such as avionics, computers, optical equipment, communications, or weapons systems. For example, electronic instrument repairers install, test, maintain, and repair a wide variety of elec-



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tronic systems, including navigational controls and biomedical instruments. Weapons maintenance technicians maintain and repair weapons used by combat forces; most of these weapons have electronic components and systems that assist in locating targets and in aiming and firing the weapon.

Engineering, science, and technical personnel in the military require specific knowledge to operate technical equipment, solve complex problems, or provide and interpret information. Personnel normally specialize in one area, such as space operations, information technology, environmental health and safety, or intelligence. Space operations specialists use and repair ground-control command equipment related to spacecraft, including electronic systems that track the location and operation of a craft. Information technology specialists develop software programs and operate computer systems. Environmental health and safety specialists inspect military facilities and food supplies for the presence of disease, germs, or other conditions hazardous to health and the environment. Intelligence specialists gather and study aerial photographs and use various types of radar and surveillance systems to discover information needed by the military.

Healthcare personnel assist medical professionals in treating and providing services for men and women in the military. They may work as part of a patient-service team in close contact with doctors, dentists, nurses, and physical therapists. Some specialize in providing emergency medical treatment, operating diagnostic tools such as x-ray and ultrasound equipment, laboratory testing of tissue and blood samples, maintaining pharmacy supplies or patients' records, constructing and repairing dental equipment or eyeglasses, or some other healthcare task.

Human resources development specialists recruit qualified personnel, place them in suitable occupations, and provide training programs. Personnel in this career area normally specialize

by activity. For example, recruiting specialists provide information about military careers to young people, parents, schools, and local communities, and explain the Armed Service's employment and training opportunities, pay and benefits, and service life. Personnel specialists collect and store information about the people in the military, including information on their previous and current training, job assignments, promotions, and health. Training specialists and instructors teach classes, give demonstrations, and instruct military personnel on how to perform their jobs.

Machine operator and production personnel operate industrial equipment, machinery, and tools to fabricate and repair parts for a variety of items and structures. They may operate engines, turbines, nuclear reactors, and water pumps. Often, they specialize by type of work performed. Welders and metalworkers, for instance, work with various types of metals to repair or form the structural parts of ships, submarines, buildings, or other equipment. Survival equipment specialists inspect, maintain, and repair survival equipment such as parachutes and aircraft life support equipment.

Media and public affairs personnel assist with the public presentation and interpretation of military information and events. They take photographs; film, record, and edit audio and video programs; present news and music programs; and produce artwork, drawings, and other visual displays. Other public affairs specialists act as interpreters and translators to convert written or spoken foreign languages into English or other languages.

Protective service personnel include those who enforce military laws and regulations and provide emergency responses to natural and human-made disasters. For example, military police control traffic, prevent crime, and respond to emergencies. Other law enforcement and security specialists investigate crimes committed on military property and guard inmates in military correctional facilities. Firefighters put out, control, and help prevent fires in buildings, on aircraft, and aboard ships.

Support service personnel provide subsistence services and support the morale and well-being of military personnel and their families. Food service specialists prepare all types of food in dining halls, hospitals, and ships. Counselors help military personnel and their families deal with personal issues. They work as part of a team that may include social workers, psychologists, medical officers, chaplains, personnel specialists, and commanders. Religious program specialists assist chaplains with religious services, religious education programs, and related administrative duties.

Transportation and material-handling specialists ensure the safe transport of people and cargo. Most personnel within this occupational group are classified according to mode of transportation, such as aircraft, motor vehicle, or ship. Aircrew members operate equipment on aircraft. Vehicle drivers operate all types of heavy military vehicles, including fuel or water tank trucks, semitrailers, heavy troop transports, and passenger buses. Quartermasters and boat operators navigate and pilot many types of small watercraft, including tugboats, gunboats, and barges. Cargo specialists load and unload military supplies, using equipment such as forklifts and cranes.

Vehicle and machinery mechanics conduct preventive and corrective maintenance on aircraft, automotive and heavy equip-

ment, heating and cooling systems, marine engines, and powerhouse station equipment. These workers typically specialize by the type of equipment that they maintain. For example, aircraft mechanics inspect, service, and repair helicopters, airplanes, and drones. Automotive and heavy equipment mechanics maintain and repair vehicles, such as humvees, trucks, tanks, self-propelled missile launchers, and other combat vehicles. They also repair bulldozers, power shovels, and other construction equipment. Heating and cooling mechanics install and repair air-conditioning, refrigeration, and heating equipment. Marine engine mechanics repair and maintain gasoline and diesel engines on ships, boats, and other watercraft. They also repair shipboard mechanical and electrical equipment. Powerhouse mechanics install, maintain, and repair electrical and mechanical equipment in power-generating stations.

**Officer occupational groups.** Combat specialty officers plan and direct military operations, oversee combat activities, and serve as combat leaders. This category includes officers in charge of tanks and other armored assault vehicles, artillery systems, Special Forces, and infantry. Combat specialty officers normally specialize by the type of unit they lead. Within the unit, they may further specialize by type of weapon system. Artillery and missile system officers, for example, direct personnel as they target, launch, test, and maintain various types of missiles and artillery. Special operations officers lead their units in offensive raids, demolitions, intelligence gathering, and search-and-rescue missions.

Engineering, science, and technical officers have a wide range of responsibilities based on their area of expertise. They lead or perform activities in areas such as space operations, environmental health and safety, and engineering. These officers may direct the operations of communications centers or the development of complex computer systems. Environmental health and safety officers study the air, ground, and water to identify and analyze sources of pollution and its effects. They also direct programs to control safety and health hazards in the workplace. Other personnel work as aerospace engineers, designing and directing the development of military aircraft, missiles, and spacecraft.

Executive, administrative, and managerial officers oversee and direct military activities in key functional areas, such as finance, accounting, health administration, international relations, and supply. Health services administrators, for instance, are responsible for the overall quality of care provided at the hospitals and clinics they operate. They must ensure that all of the departments work together. As another example, purchasing and contracting managers negotiate and monitor contracts for the purchase of the billions of dollars worth of equipment, supplies, and services that the military buys from private industry each year.

Healthcare officers provide health services at military facilities on the basis of their area of specialization. Officers who examine, diagnose, and treat patients with illness, injury, or disease include physicians, registered nurses, and dentists. Other officers provide therapy, rehabilitative treatment, and additional healthcare services for patients. Physical and occupational therapists plan and administer therapy to help patients adjust to disabilities, regain independence, and return to work. Speech

therapists evaluate and treat patients with hearing and speech problems. Dietitians manage food service facilities and plan meals for hospital patients and for outpatients who need special diets. Pharmacists manage the purchase, storage, and dispensing of drugs and medicines. Physicians and surgeons in this occupational group provide the majority of medical services to the military and their families. Dentists treat diseases, disorders, and injuries of the mouth. Optometrists treat vision problems by prescribing eyeglasses or contact lenses. Psychologists provide mental healthcare and also conduct research on behavior and emotions.

Human resource development officers manage recruitment, placement, and training strategies and programs in the military. Recruiting managers direct recruiting efforts and provide information about military careers to young people, parents, schools, and local communities. Personnel managers direct military personnel functions, such as job assignment, staff promotion, and career counseling. Training and education directors identify training needs and develop and manage educational programs designed to keep military personnel current in the skills they need.

Media and public affairs officers oversee the development, production, and presentation of information or events for the public. These officers may produce and direct motion pictures, videos, and television and radio broadcasts that are used for training, news, and entertainment. Some plan, develop, and direct the activities of military bands. Public information officers respond to inquiries about military activities and prepare news releases and reports to keep the public informed.

Protective service officers are responsible for the safety and protection of individuals and property on military bases and vessels. Emergency management officers plan and prepare for all types of natural and human-made disasters by developing warning, control, and evacuation procedures to be used in the event of a disaster. Law enforcement and security officers enforce all applicable laws on military bases and investigate crimes when the law has been broken.

Support services officers manage food service activities and perform services in support of the morale and well-being of military personnel and their families. Food services managers oversee the preparation and delivery of food services within dining facilities located on military installations and vessels. Social workers focus on improving conditions that cause social problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse, racism, and sexism. Chaplains conduct worship services for military personnel and perform other spiritual duties according to the beliefs and practices of various religious faiths.

Transportation officers manage and perform activities related to the safe transport of military personnel and material by air and water. These officers normally specialize by mode of transportation or area of expertise, because, in many cases, they must meet licensing and certification requirements. Pilots in the military fly various types of specialized airplanes and helicopters to execute combat missions and to carry troops and equipment. Navigators use radar, radio, and other navigation equipment to determine their position and plan their route of travel. Officers on ships and submarines work as a team to manage the various departments aboard their vessels. Ships' engineers direct

engineering departments aboard ships and submarines, including engine operations, maintenance, repair, heating, and power generation.

**Work environment.** Specific work environments and conditions depend on the branch of service, the occupational specialty, and other factors. Most military personnel live and work on or near military bases and facilities throughout the United States and the world. These bases and facilities usually offer comfortable housing and amenities, such as stores and recreation centers. Service members move regularly to complete their training or to meet the needs of their branch of service. Some are deployed to defend national interests. Military personnel must be physically fit, mentally stable, and ready to participate in or support combat missions that may be difficult and dangerous and involve time away from family. Some personnel are never deployed near combat areas.

In many circumstances, military personnel work standard hours, but personnel must be prepared to work long hours to fulfill missions, and they must conform to strict military rules at all times. Work hours depend on the occupational specialty and mission.

### Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

To join the military, applicants must meet age, educational, aptitude, physical, and character requirements. These requirements vary by branch of service and vary between officers, who usu-



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ally have a college degree, and enlisted personnel, who often do not. People are assigned an occupational specialty based on their aptitude, former training, and the needs of the military. All service members must sign a contract and commit to a minimum term of service. After joining the military, all enlistees receive general and occupation-specific training.

Those considering enlisting in the military should learn as much as they can about military life before making a decision. Doing so is especially important when one is thinking about making the military a career. Speaking to friends and relatives with military experience is a good idea, as is comparing the pros and cons. The next step is talking to a recruiter, who can determine whether the applicant qualifies for enlistment, explain the various enlistment options, and tell which military occupational specialties currently have openings. Applicants must bear in mind that the recruiter's job is to recruit promising applicants into his or her branch of military service, so the information that the recruiter gives is likely to stress the positive aspects of military life in the branch in which he or she serves.

Applicants should ask their recruiter for the branch they have chosen to assess their chances of being accepted for training in the occupation of their choice or, better still, take the aptitude exam to see how well they score. The military uses this exam as a placement exam, and test scores largely determine an individual's chances of being accepted into a particular training program. Selection for a particular type of training depends on the needs of the service and the applicant's general and technical aptitudes and personal preferences. Because all prospective recruits are required to take the exam, those who do so before committing themselves to enlisting have the advantage of knowing in advance whether they stand a good chance of being accepted for training in a particular specialty. The recruiter can schedule applicants to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery without any obligation to join. Many high schools offer the exam as an easy way for students to explore the possibility of a military career, and the test also affords an insight into career areas in which the student has demonstrated aptitudes and interests. The exam is not part of the process of joining the military as an officer.

If an applicant decides to join the military, the next step is to pass the physical examination and sign an enlistment contract. Negotiating the contract involves choosing, qualifying for, and agreeing on a number of enlistment options, such as the length of active-duty time, which may vary according to the option. Most active-duty programs have first-term enlistments of 4 years, although there are some 2-year, 3-year, and 6-year programs. The contract also will state the date of enlistment and other options—for example, bonuses and the types of training to be received. If the service is unable to fulfill any of its obligations under the contract, such as providing a certain kind of training, the contract may become null and void.

All branches of the Armed Services offer a delayed entry program (DEP) by which an individual can delay entry into active duty for up to 1 year after enlisting. High school students can enlist during their senior year and enter a service after graduation. Others choose this program because the job training they desire is not currently available, but will be within the coming year, or because they need time to arrange their personal affairs.

The process of joining the military as an officer is different: officers must meet educational, physical, and character requirements, but they do not take an aptitude test. The education and training section that follows includes more information.

**Education and training.** All branches of the Armed Forces usually require their members to be high school graduates or have equivalent credentials, such as a GED. In 2008, more than 98 percent of recruits were high school graduates. Officers usually need a bachelor's or graduate degree. Training varies for enlisted and officer personnel and varies by occupational specialty. Currently, the U.S. Military is working with several different certifying bodies to ensure that soldiers who separate from the Armed Forces receive formal recognition in the private sector for their military-based technical training.

**Enlisted personnel training.** Following enlistment, new members of the Armed Forces undergo initial-entry training, better known as "basic training" or "boot camp." Through courses in military skills and protocol, recruit training provides a 6- to 13-week introduction to military life. Days and nights are carefully structured and include rigorous physical exercise designed to improve strength and endurance and build each unit's cohesion.

Following basic training, most recruits take additional training at technical schools that prepare them for a particular military occupational specialty. The formal training period generally lasts from 10 to 20 weeks, although training for certain occupations—nuclear power plant operator, for example—may take as long as a year. Recruits not assigned to classroom instruction receive on-the-job training at their first duty assignment.

Many service people get college credit for the technical training they receive on duty. Combined with off-duty courses, such training can lead to an associate's degree through programs in community colleges such as the Community College of the Air Force. In addition to receiving on-duty training, military personnel may choose from a variety of educational programs. Most military installations have tuition assistance programs for people wishing to take courses during off-duty hours. The courses may be correspondence courses or courses in degree programs offered by local colleges or universities. Tuition assistance pays up to 100 percent of college costs, up to a credit-hour and annual limit. Each branch of the service provides opportunities for full-time study to a limited number of exceptional applicants. Military personnel accepted into these highly competitive programs receive full pay, allowances, tuition, and related fees. In return, they must agree to serve an additional amount of time in the service. Other highly selective programs enable enlisted personnel to qualify as commissioned officers through additional military training.

**Warrant officer training.** Warrant officers are technical and tactical leaders who specialize in a specific technical area; for example, Army aviators make up one group of warrant officers. The Army Warrant Officer Corps constitutes less than 5 percent of the total Army. Although the Corps is small in size, its level of responsibility is high. Its members receive extended career opportunities, worldwide leadership assignments, and increased pay and retirement benefits. Selection to

attend Warrant Officer Candidate School is highly competitive and restricted to those who meet rank and length-of-service requirements. The only exception is for Army aviator warrant officer, which has no requirement of prior military service.

**Officer training.** Officer training in the Armed Forces is provided through the Federal service academies (Military, Naval, Air Force, and Coast Guard); the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program offered at many colleges and universities; Officer Candidate School (OCS) or Officer Training School (OTS); the National Guard (State Officer Candidate School programs); the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences; and other programs. All are highly selective and are good options for those wishing to make the military a career. Some personnel are directly appointed to attend one of these academies or programs. People interested in obtaining training through the Federal service academies must be unmarried and without dependents in order to enter and graduate, while those seeking training through OCS, OTS, or ROTC need not be single.

Federal service academies provide a 4-year college program leading to a bachelor-of-science (B.S.) degree. Midshipmen or cadets are provided free room and board, tuition, medical and dental care, and a monthly allowance. Graduates receive regular or reserve commissions and have a 5-year active-duty obligation, or more if they are entering flight training.

To become a candidate for appointment as a cadet or midshipman in one of the service academies, applicants are required to obtain a nomination from an authorized source, usually a member of Congress. Candidates do not need to personally know a member of Congress to request a nomination. Nominees must have an academic record of the requisite quality, college aptitude test scores above an established minimum, and recommendations from teachers or school officials; they also must pass a medical examination. Appointments are made from the list of eligible nominees. Appointments to the Coast Guard Academy, however, are based strictly on merit and do not require a nomination.

ROTC programs train students in approximately 270 Army, 130 Navy and Marine Corps, and 140 Air Force units at participating colleges and universities. In addition to taking regular college courses, trainees take 3 to 5 hours of military instruction a week. After graduation, they may serve as officers on active duty for a stipulated period. Some may serve their obligation in the Reserves or National Guard. In the last 2 years of an ROTC program, students typically receive a monthly allowance while attending school, as well as additional pay for summer training. ROTC scholarships for 2, 3, and 4 years are available on a competitive basis. All scholarships pay for tuition and have allowances for textbooks, supplies, and other costs.

College graduates can earn a commission in the Armed Forces through OCS or OTS programs in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard. These programs consist of several weeks of intensive academic, physical, and leadership training. Those who graduate as officers generally must serve their obligation on active duty.

Personnel with training in certain health professions may qualify for direct appointment as officers. In the case of peo-

ple studying for the health professions, financial assistance and internship opportunities are available from the military in return for specified periods of military service. Prospective medical students can apply to the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, which offers a salary and free tuition in a program leading to a doctor-of-medicine (M.D.) degree. In return, graduates must serve for 7 years in either the military or the Public Health Service. Direct appointments also are available for those qualified to serve in other specialty areas, such as the judge advocate general (legal) or chaplain corps. Flight training is available to commissioned officers in each branch of the Armed Forces. In addition, the Army has a direct enlistment option to become a warrant officer aviator.

**Other qualifications.** In order to join the services, enlisted personnel must sign a legal agreement called an enlistment contract, which usually involves a commitment of up to 8 years of service. Depending on the terms of the contract, 2 to 6 years are spent on active duty and the balance is spent in the National Guard or Reserves. The enlistment contract obligates the service to provide the agreed-upon job, rating, pay, cash bonuses for enlistment in certain occupations, medical and other benefits, occupational training, and continuing education. In return, enlisted personnel must serve satisfactorily for the period specified.

Requirements for each service vary, but certain qualifications for enlistment are common to all branches. In order to enlist, usually one must be at least 17 years old, be a U.S. citizen or an alien holding permanent resident status, not have a felony record, and possess a birth certificate. Applicants who are 17 years old must have the consent of a parent or legal guardian before entering the service. For active service in the Army, the maximum age is 42; for the Navy, 34; for the Air Force and Coast Guard, 27; and for the Marine Corps, 29. All applicants must pass a written examination—the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery—and meet certain minimum physical standards—for example, for height, weight, vision, and overall health. Officers must meet different age and physical standards, depending on their branch of service.

Women are eligible to enter most military specialties; for example, they may become mechanics, missile maintenance technicians, heavy equipment operators, and fighter pilots, or they may enter into medical care, administrative support, and intelligence specialties. Generally, only occupations involving direct exposure to combat are excluded.

**Advancement.** Each service has different criteria for promoting personnel. Generally, the first few promotions for both enlisted personnel and officers come easily; subsequent promotions are much more competitive. Criteria for promotion may include time in service and in grade, job performance, a fitness

**Table 1. Military rank and employment for active duty personnel, January 2009**

Grade	Rank and title				Total Employment
	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps	
Commissioned officers:					
O-10 .....	General	Admiral	General	General	38
O-9 .....	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	151
O-8 .....	Major General	Rear Admiral (U)	Major General	Major General	304
O-7 .....	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (L)	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	476
O-6 .....	Colonel	Captain	Colonel	Colonel	12,137
O-5 .....	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	29,131
O-4 .....	Major	Lieutenant Commander	Major	Major	44,861
O-3 .....	Captain	Lieutenant	Captain	Captain	72,397
O-2 .....	1st Lieutenant	Lieutenant (JG)	1st Lieutenant	1st Lieutenant	27,492
O-1 .....	2nd Lieutenant	Ensign	2nd Lieutenant	2nd Lieutenant	25,762
Warrant officers:					
W-5.....	Chief Warrant Officer	Chief Warrant Officer	—	Chief Warrant Officer	679
W-4.....	Chief Warrant Officer	Chief Warrant Officer	—	Chief Warrant Officer	3,401
W-3.....	Chief Warrant Officer	Chief Warrant Officer	—	Chief Warrant Officer	5,213
W-2.....	Chief Warrant Officer	Chief Warrant Officer	—	Chief Warrant Officer	7,255
W-1.....	Warrant Officer	Warrant Officer	—	Warrant Officer	3,312
Enlisted personnel:					
E-9.....	Sergeant Major	Master Chief Petty Officer	Chief Master Sergeant	Sergeant Major/ Mas- ter Gunnery Sergeant	10,891
E-8.....	1st Sergeant/Master Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer	Senior Master Sergeant	1st Sergeant/Master Sergeant	28,134
E-7.....	Sergeant 1st Class	Chief Petty Officer	Master Sergeant	Gunnery Sergeant	101,351
E-6.....	Staff Sergeant	Petty Officer 1st Class	Technical Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	181,051
E-5.....	Sergeant	Petty Officer 2nd Class	Staff Sergeant	Sergeant	259,328
E-4.....	Corporal	Petty Officer 3rd Class	Senior Airman	Corporal	274,336
E-3.....	Private 1st Class	Seaman	Airman 1st Class	Lance Corporal	206,444
E-2.....	Private	Seaman Apprentice	Airman	Private 1st Class	93,184
E-1.....	Private	Seaman Recruit	Airman Basic	Private	71,618

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center

report (supervisor's recommendation), and passing scores on written examinations. Table 1 shows the officers, warrant officers, and enlisted ranks by service.

People planning to apply the skills they gained through military training to a civilian career should first determine how good the prospects are for civilian employment in jobs related to the military specialty that interests them. Second, they should know the prerequisites for the related civilian job. Because many civilian occupations require a license, certification, or minimum level of education, it is important to determine whether military training is sufficient for a person to enter the civilian equivalent occupation or, if not, what additional training will be required. Other *Handbook* statements discuss the job outlook, training requirements, and other aspects of civilian occupations for which military training and experience are helpful. Additional information often can be obtained from school counselors.

## Employment

In 2009, more than 2.4 million people served in the Armed Forces. More than 1.4 million were on active duty—about 561,000 in the Army, 327,000 in the Navy, 325,000 in the Air Force, and 202,000 in the Marine Corps. In addition, more than 1.0 million people served in their Reserve components and in the Air and Army National Guard, and 41,000 individuals served in the Coast Guard, which is now part of the Department of Homeland Security. Table 2 shows the occupational composition of the active-duty and Coast Guard enlisted personnel in January 2009; table 3 presents similar information for active-duty and Coast Guard officers, including noncommissioned warrant officers.

Military personnel are stationed throughout the United States and in many countries around the world. About half of all military jobs in the U.S. are located in California, Texas, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, and Georgia. Approximately 265,000 service members were deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as of June 1, 2009. An additional 378,000 individuals were stationed outside the United States, including 160,000 assigned to ships at sea. About 95,000 were stationed in Europe, mainly in Germany, and an-



*In 2009, 41,000 individuals served in the Coast Guard, which is now part of the Department of Homeland Security.*

other 71,000 were assigned to East Asia and the Pacific area, mostly in Japan and the Republic of Korea.

## Job Outlook

Opportunities should be excellent for qualified individuals in all branches of the Armed Forces.

**Employment change.** The United States spends a significant portion of its overall budget on national defense. The num-

**Table 2. Military enlisted personnel by broad occupational category and branch of military service, January 2009**

Occupational Group - Enlisted	Army	Air Force	Coast Guard	Marine Corps	Navy	Total, all services
Administrative occupations.....	6,727	17,537	1,621	9,219	22,147	57,251
Combat specialty occupations.....	132,079	480	904	52,445	7,595	193,503
Construction occupations.....	20,872	4,689	—	6,759	5,521	37,841
Electronic and electrical repair occupations .....	37,466	34,751	4,663	16,199	47,985	141,064
Engineering, science, and technical occupations.....	42,770	41,328	1,212	26,940	38,778	151,028
Healthcare occupations .....	30,945	16,420	772	—	23,960	72,097
Human resource development occupations.....	20,251	11,321	1	7,134	5,300	44,007
Machine operator and production occupations.....	6,372	6,181	1,816	2,575	8,596	25,540
Media and public affairs occupations .....	8,233	6,910	152	2,518	3,659	21,472
Protective service occupations .....	29,076	34,099	2,816	7,156	12,555	85,702
Support services occupations.....	13,554	6,071	1,263	2,765	9,188	32,841
Transportation and material handling occupations .....	69,454	31,396	11,748	25,909	45,176	183,683
Vehicle and machinery mechanic occupations .....	54,771	43,409	6,119	22,068	45,209	171,576
Non-occupation coded personnel.....	1,081	6,681	326	12	755	8,855
<b>Total, by service .....</b>	<b>473,651</b>	<b>261,273</b>	<b>33,413</b>	<b>181,699</b>	<b>276,424</b>	<b>1,226,460</b>

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center

**Table 3. Military officer personnel by broad occupational category and branch of service, January 2009**

Occupational Group - Officer	Army	Air Force	Coast Guard	Marine Corps	Navy	Total, all services
Combat specialty occupations.....	20,201	2,611	77	5,315	1,125	29,329
Engineering, science, and technical occupations.....	21,676	17,800	210	4,006	7,616	51,308
Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations.....	13,104	7,327	197	2,725	5,442	28,795
Healthcare occupations.....	10,626	8,661	1	—	7,468	26,756
Human resource development occupations.....	2,676	2,293	151	279	520	5,919
Media and public affairs occupations.....	310	305	15	175	290	1,095
Protective service occupations.....	2,867	1,131	60	353	284	4,695
Support services occupations.....	1,741	758	3	38	857	3,397
Transportation occupations.....	12,519	22,828	580	7,345	27,340	70,612
Non-occupation coded personnel.....	2,597	866	6,769	88	386	10,706
<b>Total, by service.....</b>	<b>88,317</b>	<b>64,580</b>	<b>8,063</b>	<b>20,324</b>	<b>51,328</b>	<b>232,612</b>

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center

ber of active-duty personnel is expected to remain roughly constant through 2018. However, recent conflicts and the resulting strain on the military may lead to an increase in the number of active-duty personnel. The current goal of the Armed Forces is to maintain a force sufficient to fight and win two major regional conflicts at the same time. Political events, however, could lead to a significant restructuring with or without an increase in size.

**Job prospects.** Opportunities should be excellent for qualified individuals in all branches of the Armed Forces through 2018. Many military personnel retire with a pension after 20 years of service, while they still are young enough to start a new career. About 184,000 personnel must be recruited each year to replace those who complete their commitment or retire. Since the end of the draft in 1973, the military has met its personnel requirements with volunteers. When the economy is good and civilian employment opportunities generally are more favorable, it is more difficult for all the services to meet their recruitment quotas. When there are economic downturns, recruits may face more competition for various occupational specialties. It

is also more difficult to meet these goals during times of war, when recruitment goals typically rise.

Educational requirements will continue to rise as military jobs become more technical and complex. High school graduates and applicants with a college background will be sought to fill the ranks of enlisted personnel, while virtually all officers will need at least a bachelor's degree and, in some cases, a graduate degree as well.

### Earnings

The earnings structure for military personnel is shown in table 4. Most enlisted personnel started as recruits at Grade E-1 in 2009; however, those with special skills or above-average education started as high as Grade E-4. Most warrant officers started at Grade W-1 or W-2, depending upon their occupational and academic qualifications and the branch of service of which they were a member, but warrant officer typically is not an entry-level occupation and, consequently, most of these individuals had previous military service. Most commissioned officers started at Grade O-1; some with advanced education started at Grade O-2, and some highly trained officers—for example, physicians and dentists—started as high as Grade O-3. Pay varies by total years of service as well as rank. Because it usually takes many years to reach the higher ranks, most personnel in higher ranks receive the higher pay rates awarded to those with many years of service.

In addition to receiving their basic pay, military personnel are provided with free room and board (or a tax-free housing and subsistence allowance), free medical and dental care, a military clothing allowance, military supermarket and department store shopping privileges, 30 days of paid vacation a year (referred to as leave), and travel opportunities. In many duty stations, military personnel may receive a housing allowance that can be used for off-base housing. This allowance can be substantial, but varies greatly by rank and duty station. For example, in fiscal year 2009, the basic allowance for housing for an E-4 with dependents was \$681.90 per month; for a comparable individual without dependents, it was \$511.50. The allowance for an O-4 with dependents was \$1,297.80 per month; for a comparable individual without dependents, it was \$1,128.60. Other allowances are paid for foreign duty, hazardous duty, submarine and flight duty, and employment as a medical officer. Athletic and other facilities—such as gymnasiums, tennis courts, golf courses, bowling centers, libraries, and movie theaters—are



*Educational requirements will continue to rise as military jobs become more technical and complex.*

**Table 4. Military basic monthly pay by grade for active duty personnel, April 2009**

Grade	Years of service					
	Less than 2	Over 4	Over 8	Over 12	Over 16	Over 20
<b>Commissioned officers:</b>						
O-10 .....	—	—	—	—	—	14,689
O-9 .....	—	—	—	—	—	12,847
O-8 .....	9,090	9,641	10,299	10,786	11,235	12,172
O-7 .....	7,553	8,195	8,660	9,193	10,299	11,007
O-6 .....	5,598	6,554	6,861	6,898	7,983	8,797
O-5 .....	4,667	5,690	6,053	6,571	7,287	7,697
O-4 .....	4,027	5,042	5,640	6,326	6,654	6,723
O-3 .....	3,540	4,723	5,197	5,622	5,760	5,760
O-2 .....	3,059	4,148	4,233	4,233	4,233	4,233
O-1 .....	2,655	3,341	3,341	3,341	3,341	3,341
<b>Warrant officers:</b>						
W-5 .....	—	—	—	—	—	6,506
W-4 .....	3,659	4,160	4,541	5,021	5,515	5,903
W-3 .....	3,341	3,670	4,114	4,565	4,904	5,422
W-2 .....	2,957	3,382	3,871	4,164	4,481	4,757
W-1 .....	2,595	3,108	3,573	3,882	4,199	4,484
<b>Enlisted personnel:</b>						
E-9 .....	—	—	—	4,521	4,796	5,185
E-8 .....	—	—	3,619	3,878	4,125	4,475
E-7 .....	2,516	2,990	3,285	3,578	3,839	3,995
E-6 .....	2,176	2,602	2,951	3,226	3,323	3,370
E-5 .....	1,994	2,335	2,671	2,828	2,828	2,828
E-4 .....	1,828	2,128	2,219	2,219	2,219	2,219
E-3 .....	1,650	1,860	1,860	1,860	1,860	1,860
E-2 .....	1,569	1,569	1,569	1,569	1,569	1,569
E-1 4 months+ .....	1,400	—	—	—	—	—
E-1 Less than 4 months .....	1,295	—	—	—	—	—

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense—Defense Finance and Accounting Service

available on many military installations. Military personnel are eligible for retirement benefits after 20 years of service.

The Veterans Administration (VA) provides numerous benefits to those who have served at least 24 months of continuous active duty in the Armed Forces. Veterans are eligible for free care in VA hospitals for all service-related disabilities, regardless of time served; those with other medical problems are eligible for free VA care if they are unable to pay the cost of hospitalization elsewhere. Admission to a VA medical center depends on the availability of beds, however. Veterans also are eligible for certain loans, including loans to purchase a home. Regardless of their health, veterans can convert a military life insurance policy to an individual policy with any participating company upon separation from the military. In addition, job counseling, testing, and placement services are available.

Veterans who participate in the Montgomery GI Bill Program receive education benefits. Under this program, Armed Forces personnel may elect to deduct up to \$100 a month from their pay during the first 12 months of active duty, putting the money toward their future education. In fiscal year 2009, veterans who served on active duty for 3 or more years or who spent 2 years in active duty plus 4 years in the Selected Reserve received \$1,321 a month in basic benefits for 36 months of full-time institutional training. Those who enlisted and served less than 3 years received \$1,073 a month for 36 months of the same. In addition, each service provides its own contributions to the enlistee's future education. The sum of the amounts from all these sources becomes the service member's educational fund. Upon

separation from active duty, the fund can be used to finance educational costs at any VA-approved institution. Among those institutions which are approved by the VA are many vocational, correspondence, certification, business, technical, and flight training schools; community and junior colleges; and colleges and universities. The new Post-9/11 GI Bill is an alternative education benefit. There is no deductible for service personnel. The size of the benefit is scaled to the State and to the institution that the veteran is attending. Service personnel must carefully choose which program will be of the most benefit to them in their planned educational future.

### Sources of Additional Information

Each of the military services publishes handbooks, fact sheets, and pamphlets describing its entrance requirements, its training and advancement opportunities, and other aspects of military careers. These publications are widely available at all recruiting stations, at most State employment service offices, and in high schools, colleges, and public libraries. Information on educational and other veterans' benefits is available from VA offices located throughout the country.

In addition, the Defense Manpower Data Center, an agency of the Department of Defense, publishes *Military Career Guide Online*, a compendium of military occupational, training, and career information designed for use by students and jobseekers. This information is available on the Internet at <http://www.todaysmilitary.com>.

The Occupational Outlook Quarterly also provides information about military careers and training; see the spring 2007 article “Military training for civilian careers (Or: How to gain practical experience while serving your country),” available online at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2007/spring/art02.pdf>.

The Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) provides information on a wide range of occupational characteristics. Links to O\*NET appear at the end of the Internet version of this occupational statement, accessible at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/ocos249.htm>