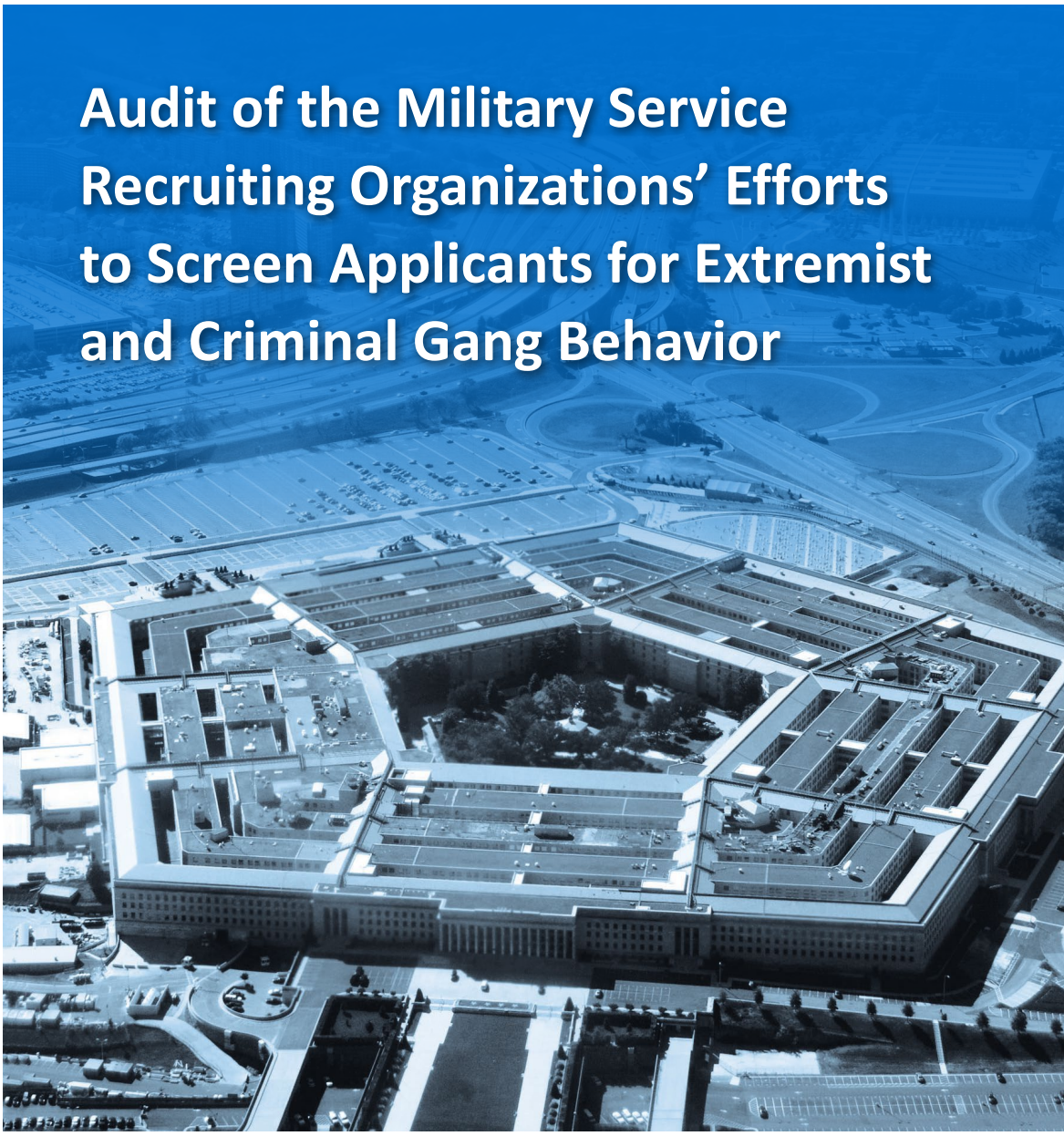
Report No. DODIG-2023-103

INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

AUGUST 3, 2023

Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior



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Results in Brief

Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior

August 3, 2023

Objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether Military Service recruiting organizations screened applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service policies and procedures.

Background

DoD and Military Service-specific guidance provides standards for enlistment, appointment, and induction into the Military Services. On April 9, 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum outlining immediate actions to address extremism across the DoD, including the review and standardization of screening questionnaires to solicit specific information from applicants about current or previous extremist behavior. Military Service recruiting organizations are responsible for screening applicants. The screening includes interviews, questionnaires and forms, tattoo review, and background checks.

Findings

The Military Service recruiting organizations generally screened applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service guidance. However, for the applicants required to complete screening steps, Military Service recruiters did not:

- annotate that 53 (41 percent) of 129 applicants were asked and responded to initial questions about extremist or criminal gang affiliation;

Findings (cont'd)

- administer screening questionnaires or forms for 43 (40 percent) of 107 applicants;
- implement tattoo and body modification review procedures for 12 (9 percent) of 132 applicants;
- provide evidence of fingerprint results for 13 (9 percent) of 142 applicants; or
- provide evidence that a background investigation was initiated for 1 (1 percent) of 137 applicants.

As a result of not completing required applicant screening steps, Military Service recruiters may not have identified all applicants with extremist or criminal gang associations during the screening process, increasing the potential for future security risks and disruptions to good order, morale, and discipline.

We also determined that Air Force recruiters entered data in the Air Force recruiting system for 26 (34 percent) of 76 Air Force applicants reviewed, showing that the applicants disclosed extremist or gang associations when the applicants had not made such disclosures. Air Force recruiters stated that they mistakenly checked boxes in the system indicating applicant extremist or gang associations. Additionally, the system did not automatically stop the application process because of a lack of system controls.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Secretaries of the Military Departments issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations. We further recommend that the Secretaries of the Military Departments establish and implement requirements for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures. During the audit, Air Force officials implemented a system change to correct the deficiency we identified with the Air Force recruiting system.

Results in Brief

Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior

Management Comments and Our Response

Officials from the Offices of the Secretary of the Army, Navy, and Air Force agreed with the recommendations and described actions planned and taken to resolve the recommendations. Therefore, Recommendations A.1.b, A.2.a, A.2.b, A.3.a, and A.3.b are resolved and open and Recommendation A.1.a is closed.

Please see the recommendations table on the next page for the status of recommendations.

Recommendations Table

Management	Recommendations Unresolved	Recommendations Resolved	Recommendations Closed
Secretary of the Army	None	A.1.b	A.1.a
Secretary of the Navy	None	A.2.a and A.2.b	None
Secretary of the Air Force	None	A.3.a and A.3.b	None

Note: The following categories are used to describe agency management's comments to individual recommendations.

- **Unresolved** – Management has not agreed to implement the recommendation or has not proposed actions that will address the recommendation.
- **Resolved** – Management agreed to implement the recommendation or has proposed actions that will address the underlying finding that generated the recommendation.
- **Closed** – DoD OIG verified that the agreed upon corrective actions were implemented.


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August 3, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior (DODIG-2023-103)

This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's audit. We previously provided copies of the draft report and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. These comments are included in the report.

This report contains recommendations for Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Officials from the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force agreed to address Recommendations A.1.b, A.2.a, A.2.b, A.3.a, and A.3.b respectively; therefore, we consider the recommendations resolved and open. As described in the Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response section of this report, we will close the recommendations when you provide us documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions to implement the recommendations are completed. Therefore, within 90 days please provide us your response concerning specific actions in process or completed on the recommendations. Send your response to either followup@dodig.mil if unclassified or rfunet@dodig.smil.mil if classified SECRET.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Military Personnel and Quality of Life) memorandum, issued on July 10, 2023, addressed Recommendation A.1.a; therefore, we consider this recommendation closed.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the audit. If you have any questions please contact me at [redacted]

FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:

Richard B. Vasquez
Assistant Inspector General for Audit
Readiness and Global Operations

Contents

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Introduction

Objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether Military Service recruiting organizations screened applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service policies and procedures.

We removed the term "supremacist" from our announced audit title and objective. We removed supremacist because the term is not included in the December 2021 update to DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1325.06, "Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces."[1] See Appendix A for a discussion of the scope and methodology and prior coverage.

Background

In October 2020, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness released the "Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces."[2] The report was issued in response to Public Law 116-92, "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020," section 530, which required the Secretary of Defense to study the feasibility of screening for extremist and gang-related activity in background investigations and screenings of individuals who seek to enlist in the Armed Forces.[3]

According to the report, "each year the DoD recruits approximately 400,000 applicants for military service, of which approximately 250,000 individuals contract into the All-Volunteer Force." The report states that new members of the military, whether enlisted or officer, undergo a thorough screening process to ensure they meet the high standards required to serve in the military. Additionally, the report states that the DoD is committed to recruiting high-quality applicants and requiring Military Services to follow policies and requirements concerning applicant screening. The report concludes, "Using the tools available, we believe we have been effective at screening for individuals who possess or advocate extremist ideologies, or actively participate in extremist groups, and we continuously review our policies, practices, and methods for improvement."

[1] DoDI 1325.06, "Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces," November 27, 2009 (Incorporating Change 2, December 20, 2021).

[2] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, "Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces," October 14, 2020.

[3] Public Law 116-92, "The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020," section 530, "Study Regarding Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces," December 20, 2019.

DoD and Military Service Policies for Applicants to the Military Services

DoDI 1304.26, "Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction," provides common entrance qualification standards for enlistment, appointment, and induction into the Military Services.[4] The instruction provides basic eligibility criteria for applicants to the Military Services, such as age, citizenship, education, medical standards, and physical fitness. Additionally, DoDI 1304.26 includes character and conduct standards to minimize the entrance of persons who are likely to become disciplinary cases, security risks, or who are likely to disrupt good order, morale, and discipline.

An applicant is eligible for the Military Services based on their ability to meet standards, including obtaining waivers, when required. A waiver is a formal request to consider an applicant who may not be qualified to serve for reasons including inappropriate conduct, current or past medical conditions, or drug use. DoDI 1304.26 states that applicants are ineligible for the Military Services if they have a significant criminal record or have exhibited antisocial behavior or other character traits rendering the applicant unfit for service. According to DoDI 1304.26, the Secretaries of the Military Departments are responsible for establishing procedures to perform reviews and grant waivers, and for ensuring applicants meet standards or are granted exceptions.

In addition to DoDI 1304.26, each Military Service has Service-specific guidance for applicant enlistment, including the following regulations and standard operating procedure guides.

- Army Regulation 601-210, "Regular Army and Reserve Components Enlistment Program," August 31, 2016
- Marine Corps Recruiting Command Order 1100.1A, "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Enlistment Processing Manual," May 1, 2020
- Marine Corps Command Recruiting Order 1100.2A, "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Officer Commissioning Manual," January 11, 2016
- Commander Navy Recruiting Command Instruction 1130.8L, "Navy Recruiting Manual–Enlisted," June 30, 2021
- Commander Navy Recruiting Command Instruction 1131.2G CH-3, "Navy Recruiting Manual–Officer," June 14, 2018
- "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," version 1, July 2021

[4] DoDI 1304.26, "Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction," March 23, 2015 (Incorporating Change 3, October 26, 2018).

- Air Force Manual 36-2032, "Military Recruiting and Accessions," September 27, 2019[5]

Military Service recruiting organizations are responsible for screening applicants for entry into the Armed Forces. Table 1 identifies Military Service recruiting organizations responsible for screening applicants.

Table 1. Military Service Recruiting Organizations Responsible for Screening Applicants

Military Service	Military Service Recruiting Organization
Army	Army Recruiting Command
Marine Corps	Marine Corps Recruiting Command
Navy	Navy Recruiting Command
Air Force and Space Force	Air Force Recruiting Service

Source: The DoD OIG.

In addition to DoDI 1304.26 standards, the screening requirements for the Military Services include the following elements.

- Interviews – Recruiters interview applicants to determine eligibility during entrance processing. While Military Service recruiters interview applicants to identify extremist and criminal gang associations, interviews rely on individuals to self-identify potentially disqualifying behavior.
- Screening questionnaires and forms – Applicants complete forms during entrance processing, such as medical and background information forms. Applicants may also complete questionnaires, such as suitability assessments that inquire about ideologies and associations. While Military Service recruiters use screening questionnaires to determine applicant associations with extremist groups and criminal gangs, questionnaires rely on individuals to self-identify potentially disqualifying behavior.
- Tattoo screening – Applicants with tattoos, brands, or body ornamentation complete forms that document the location and description of body modifications. Recruiters view applicants' visible tattoos and body modifications and review the screening forms for tattoo and body modification location and content. Recruiters do not ask applicants to undress to view tattoos. Instead, a medical provider identifies and documents body marks, scars, and tattoos as part of the applicant's accession medical examination.[6] Military Service recruiters conduct the

[5] According to Air Force Manual 36-2032, accession is a personnel action that places an individual on regular or reserve status for a Military Service. For the purpose of this report, we use accessions broadly as the process of joining one of the Military Services.

[6] The accession medical evaluation is a review of an applicant's medical history and a full body examination.

tattoo, brand, marking, and body modification screening to determine associations with extremist groups and criminal gangs. This screening tool relies on the applicant to describe and self-identify tattoo and body modification meanings and depends on the recruiter to provide judgement regarding suitability. Recruiters may contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Cryptology and Racketeering Records Unit for assistance identifying and analyzing questionable tattoos to determine potential meanings and significance.

- Background checks – Applicants undergo an advanced fingerprint check; a background investigation, including national agency, local agency, and credit checks; and complete the Standard Form 86, "Questionnaire for National Security Positions." Military Service recruiters do not perform the background checks, but review background check results to determine applicant eligibility. During the background investigation screening step, applicant data is pulled from local and national criminal databases.

DoD Policy on Extremism and Criminal Gang Activities

DoDI 1325.06, "Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces," prohibits members of the Armed Forces from engaging in extremist activities.[7] Additionally, DoDI 1325.06 states that Service members must not actively advocate criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes. According to DoDI 1325.06, military personnel must not actively participate in extremist activities, such as:

- advocating or engaging in unlawful force, violence, or other illegal means to deprive individuals of their constitutional or other rights or to achieve political, religious, discriminatory, or ideological goals;
- advocating, engaging in, or supporting terrorism or the overthrow of the government, including the U.S., state, or territorial governments; or
- advocating unlawful discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.[8]

The DoDI also addresses the handling of military personnel participation in criminal gang activity. However, it does not establish policy regarding extremist and gang activities for applicants seeking to join the Military Services.

[7] DoDI 1325.06, "Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces," November 27, 2009 (Incorporating Change 2, December 20, 2021).

[8] According to DoDI 1325.06, active participation includes fundraising; demonstrating or rallying; recruiting, training, organizing, or leading members; distributing material (including posting online); knowingly displaying paraphernalia, words, or symbols; and having tattoos or body markings associated with such gangs or organizations.

Military Service Guidance on Extremism and Criminal Gang Association

DoDI 1304.26 and DoDI 1325.06 state that:

- military personnel are prohibited from actively participating in extremist activities and must not advocate criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes; and
- Military Departments should minimize entrance of persons who are likely to become disciplinary cases, security risks, or who are likely to disrupt good order, morale, and discipline.

Each Military Service has applicant enlistment standards that are consistent with requirements in DoDI 1304.26 and DoDI 1325.06. While DoDI 1304.26 does not specifically address extremism or criminal gang behavior, guidance documents for each Service use similar language concerning extremist and criminal gang ideologies. Table 2 shows enlistment language from the Military Services regarding extremism and criminal gang association.

Table 2. Military Service Guidance on Applicants Associated with Extremist Organizations and Criminal Gangs

Military Service	Military Service Guidance	Guidance Language on Extremism and Criminal Gang Activities
Army	"Applicant Screening Check–Association with an Extremist/Hate Organization or Gang" Memorandum	"Extremist/hate organization ideologies/ affiliations are not in line with the Army's core values and applicants that are associated with these beliefs and/or organization(s) are neither permitted to, nor suitable for, enlistment in the United States Army." "Applicants will be asked … 'Have you ever had, or currently have, any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?' . Applicants answering 'Yes' will require an approved waiver … due to failing to meet accessions standards.
Marine Corps	"Marine Corps Recruiting Command Enlistment Processing Manual" "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Officer Commissioning Manual"	"Applicants who have affiliated with gangs should not be denied enlistment based solely on affiliation. However, applicants with a history of criminal activity or violence associated with gang activity are not enlistment eligible." "The Participation in Gangs, Extremist Organization, or Activities [Statement of Understanding] and Questionable Conduct/Aberrant Behavior Screening Form will be completed … . Any 'YES' answers require an interview … to ascertain enlistment eligibility … ."

Table 2. Military Service Guidance on Applicants Associated with Extremist Organizations and Criminal Gangs (cont'd)

Military Service	Military Service Guidance	Guidance Language on Extremism and Criminal Gang Activities
Navy	"Navy Recruiting Manual–Enlisted" "Navy Recruiting Manual–Officer"	"Applicants who have affiliated with gangs should not be denied enlistment based on that affiliation alone. However, applicants who have a history of criminal activity or violence associated with gang activity are not enlistment eligible." "Applicants who participated in supremacist or extremist organizations, reveal any extreme prejudice or vices, … or have a history that they illegally denied the rights of any individual or group are not enlistment eligible."
Air Force and Space Force	"Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide"	"Recruiters ask every applicant … 'Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?' … . Applicants answering 'YES' will require an approved Morals Eligibility Determination by the Squadron Commander in order to continue processing for entry … ." "Any military applicant with a criminal history associated with an extremist/hate organization or gang is not qualified for entry." "'Former' membership in gangs or extremist/hate organizations or activities that call into question an applicant's moral character may … disqualify them. However, personnel who have been forthcoming in their understanding of the importance of discontinuing those activities … may be eligible for entry with the approval of the associated Squadron Commander as long as the applicant has no criminal history associated with an extremist/hate organization or gang."

Source: The DoD OIG.

Applicants to the Military Services are not ineligible solely on membership in an extremist organization or criminal gang. Rather, an applicant becomes ineligible when the applicant is unable to obtain an approved waiver or has a criminal history associated with the extremist organization or criminal gang.

DoD-Wide Actions to Counter Extremism

On April 9, 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued the memorandum, "Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Department and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group."[9] The memorandum established the Countering Extremist Activity Working Group to oversee the implementation of immediate actions and the development of mid-term and long-term recommendations regarding extremism.[10] Additionally, the memorandum outlined immediate actions to address extremism across the DoD, including the review and update of DoDI 1325.06 to revise the definition of prohibited extremist activities among current uniformed military personnel, and a review and standardization of accessions screening questionnaires to solicit specific information about current or previous extremist behavior.

On December 20, 2021, in response to the Secretary of Defense's memorandum, the DoD issued the "Report on Countering Extremist Activity Within the Department of Defense," as a status report on the implementation of immediate actions to counter extremism.[11] Additionally, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued the updated DoDI 1325.06 on December 20, 2021. The updated DoDI 1325.06 includes revised policies for handling protest, extremist, and criminal gang activities among Service members and defines extremist activities.[12]

Additionally, the "Report on Countering Extremist Activity Within the Department of Defense" states that the DoD completed the standardization of screening questionnaires directed in the Secretary of Defense memorandum. The Secretary of Defense directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments to design standardized screening questions to gather information to ensure that only the best qualified recruits are selected for service, and clarify that any false answers could form the basis for punitive action for fraudulent enlistment. According to the report, the Military Services updated their accession screening forms throughout the spring of 2021 to include questions on membership in racially biased entities and other extremist groups and participation in violent acts.

Furthermore, the "Report on Countering Extremist Activity Within the Department of Defense" discusses the DoD's partnership with the FBI. The report states that the partnership allows recruiting commands and the Military Criminal Investigative Organizations access to the FBI's Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal,

[9] Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Department and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group," April 9, 2021.

[10] The working group's name later changed from the Countering Extremism Working Group to Countering Extremist Activity Working Group.

[11] DoD, "Report on Countering Extremist Activity Within the Department of Defense," December 20, 2021.

[12] The previous version of DoDI 1325.06 from November 22, 2012, included the term "supremacist"; however, "supremacist" is not in the December 2021 update to DoDI 1325.06.

which offers information on local gangs, white supremacy and nationalist groups, gang signs, and extremist symbols and tattoos. According to the report, an applicant that provides a positive response to the accession screening forms or has a tattoo identified in the Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal requires a waiver approved by Service senior leadership to continue processing into the Armed Forces.

What We Reviewed

We selected a random, statistical sample of applicants for each Military Service from July 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022, and determined whether the Military Services screened the applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service policies. We obtained applicant data from Military Service recruiting organizations and selected 224 applicants for our review from a total population of 193,702. The 224 consisted of a statistical sample of 195 applicants and all 29 applicants with a recorded "yes" response to extremist or criminal gang association. The statistical sample comprised applicants from each Military Service based on the total applicant population of all Military Services. The additional 29 selected applicants had a "yes" response to the question, "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" recorded in the Military Services' data. See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of the scope and methodology. Table 3 shows the population and sample sizes selected for our review.

Table 3. Population and Sample Selection

Military Service	Population Size	Statistical Sample Size	Additional Applicants Selected	Total Sample
Army	70,715	64	2	66
Marine Corps	37,304	34	0	34
Navy	30,402	28	0	28
Air Force	54,536	49	27	76
Space Force	745	20	0	20
Total	**193,702**	**195**	**29**	**224**

Source: The DoD OIG.

The applicants we reviewed were at various stages in the Military Services accessions process. For the purposes of our audit, we defined applicant statuses as follows.

- Completed accessions process describes an applicant who the Military Services reported as entered active duty, sent to basic training, or completed accessions.
- Delayed entry program status describes an applicant who has a future reporting date for entry on active duty.
- In process status describes an applicant who has completed some but not all screening steps.
- Suspended or closed status describes an applicant with an application that may be pending additional action or documentation and may be re-opened in the future. This status also includes applicants that have been disqualified from the accessions process.

Tables 4 and 5 show the status of applicants as of August 2022.

Table 4. Applicant Status for Statistical Sample

Military Service	Completed Accessions Process	Delayed Entry Program	In Process	Suspended or Closed	Total Applicants
Army	34	0	0	30	64
Marine Corps	8	4	8	14	34
Navy	11	3	14	0	28
Air Force	29	0	1	19	49
Space Force	11	0	0	9	20
Total	**93**	**7**	**23**	**72**	**195**

Source: The DoD OIG.

Table 5. Applicant Status for Additional Individuals Selected for the Sample

Military Service	Completed Accessions Process	Delayed Entry Program	In Process	Suspended or Closed	Total Applicants
Army	1	0	0	1	2
Air Force	12	0	0	15	27
Total	**13**	**0**	**0**	**16**	**29**

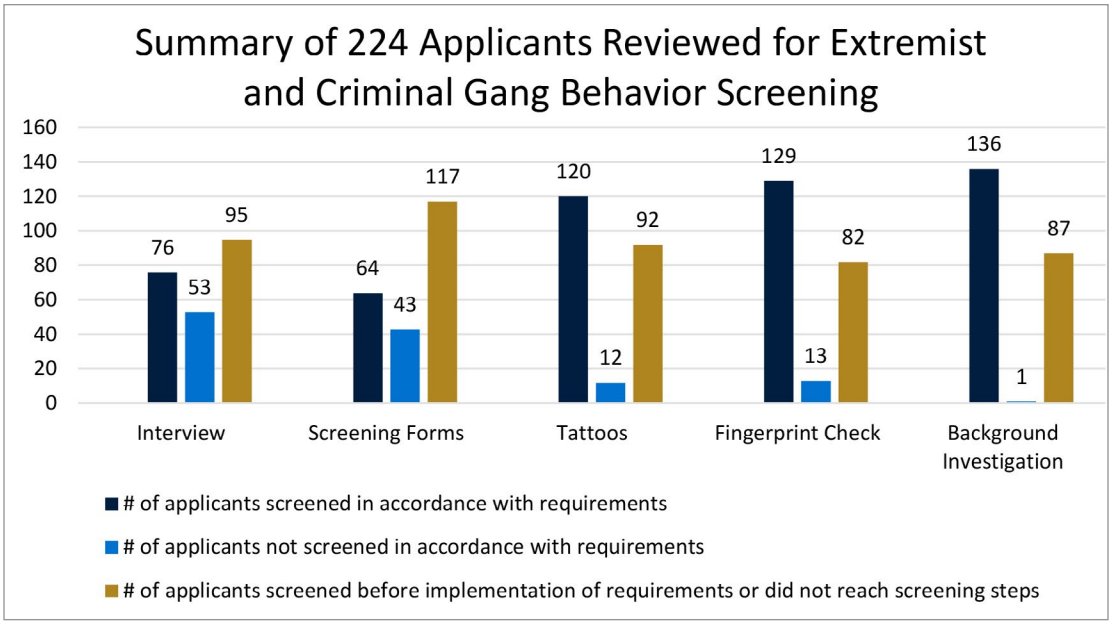
Source: The DoD OIG.

Finding A

Military Service Recruiting Organizations Generally Screened Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior with Some Exceptions

The Military Service recruiting organizations generally screened applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service guidance, using applicant interviews, screening questionnaires, tattoo reviews, and background investigations. Of the 224 applicants we reviewed, we identified that some applicants were screened before the implementation of DoD and Military Service requirements, or had applications that were in process or closed before reaching some of the screening steps in the accessions process. We also identified instances where Military Service recruiters did not complete required screening steps in accordance with guidance. Figure 1 summarizes the 224 applicants we reviewed for extremist and criminal gang behavior screening.

Figure 1. Summary of 224 Applicants Reviewed for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior Screening



Source: The DoD OIG.

Military Service recruiters did not complete screening steps for some applicants because recruiters did not always apply screening guidance. For the applicants required to complete screening steps, Military Service recruiters did not:

- annotate that 53 (41 percent) of 129 applicants were asked and responded to initial appointment interview questions about extremist or criminal gang affiliation;
- administer screening questionnaires or forms for 43 (40 percent) of 107 applicants;
- implement tattoo and body modification review procedures for 12 (9 percent) of 132 applicants;
- provide evidence of fingerprint check results for 13 (9 percent) of 142 applicants; or
- provide evidence that a background investigation was initiated for 1 (1 percent) of 137 applicants.[13]

As a result of not completing required applicant screening steps, Military Service recruiters may not identify all applicants with extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions screening process, increasing the potential for future security risks and disruptions to good order, morale, and discipline.

Military Service Recruiting Organizations Generally Screened Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior in Accordance with Guidance

The Military Service recruiting organizations generally implemented steps to screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service guidance, using applicant interviews, screening questionnaires, tattoo reviews,

The Military Service recruiting organizations generally implemented steps to screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang behavior in accordance with DoD and Military Service guidance, using applicant interviews, screening questionnaires, tattoo reviews, and background investigations.

[13] The bulleted list does not total 224 because an applicant can be represented in more than one screening step. Percentages in each bullet do not include applicants who were screened before the implementation of requirements or who did not reach screening steps. For example, 33 applicants did not have the interview requirement at the time of screening, and neither the Marine Corps nor Navy required an extremism interview question for 34 and 28 applicants, respectively. Only 129 applicants [224 - (33 + 34 + 28) = 129] in our sample were required to be asked and respond to interview questions about extremist or criminal gang affiliation. Therefore, 41 percent of applicants (53 / 129 =0.41) with the extremism interview requirement were not asked and did not respond to extremist or criminal gang affiliation interview questions.

and background investigations. However, we identified instances where Military Service recruiters did not complete required screening steps for some applicants in accordance with guidance.

Some Applicants Were Screened Before Requirements Were Implemented or Did Not Reach Screening Steps

We identified that some applicants were screened before the implementation of DoD and Military Service requirements or had applications that were in process or closed before reaching some of the screening steps in the accessions process. Table 6 summarizes the number of applicants we reviewed who Military Service recruiters screened for extremist and criminal gang behavior before the implementation of requirements or who did not reach screening steps. An applicant can be represented in more than one screening step as described in Table 6.

Table 6. Applicants Screened Before the Implementation of Requirements or Who Did Not Reach Screening Steps

Military Service	Total Sample Selection	Number of Applicants				
		Interviewed Before Requirement Implementation	Screened Before Questionnaire or Form Requirement and Did Not Reach Screening Step	Who Did Not Reach the Tattoo Review Screening Step	Who Did Not Reach the Fingerprint Check Screening Step	Who Did Not Reach the Background Investigation Screening Step
Army	66	8	58	0	10	25
Marine Corps	34	0	2	14	15	15
Navy	28	0	12	13	14	14
Air Force	76	21	39	0	34	24
Space Force	20	4	6	0	9	9
Total	**224**	**33**	**117**	**27**	**82**	**87**

Note: The totals in the table do not equal 224 because the table only reflects applicants who were screened before the implementation of requirements or who did not reach screening steps. Additionally, an applicant can be represented in more than one screening step.

Source: The DoD OIG.

During our review, we identified instances where some requirements, such as using extremist and criminal gang screening questionnaires or forms, were not in place at the time Military Services recruiters screened applicants. For example, 103 of 224 applicants we reviewed were screened before the implementation of the

Army and Air Force screening form requirements.[14] Specifically, one Space Force applicant did not complete an "Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment 'Former' Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations" form because the applicant's file was closed before the screening form was required. The Air Force closed the applicant's file on November 5, 2021, when the applicant stopped responding to recruiters, which was before the Air Force screening form existed and before the form's January 13, 2022, implementation date. Therefore, recruiters were not required to screen applicants, in this instance and in similar instances, when requirements were not in place at the time applicants were screened.

We also identified instances where applicants had applications that were in process or closed before reaching some screening steps in the accessions process, such as background checks. For example, 82 of 224 applicants we reviewed did not reach the fingerprint check screening step, and 87 of 224 applicants did not reach the background investigation screening step, as the applicants were still in process or had applications that were closed before reaching the screening steps. Specifically, the Army did not have fingerprint check results for an Army applicant because the Army closed the applicant's file after the initial interview appointment due to the applicant's Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test score.[15] Army guidance requires fingerprint check results before an applicant's entry into active duty, leaving for training, or arriving at the first duty assignment. Therefore, recruiters were not required to screen applicants, in this instance and in similar instances, when applicants did not reach screening steps in the accessions process.

Recruiters Interviewed Applicants for Extremist or Criminal Gang Associations

Military Service recruiters conducted initial appointment interviews and annotated that 76 of 224 applicants we reviewed were asked and responded to a question about the applicant's extremist or gang associations during the initial appointment interview. However, according to guidance, only Army and Air Force recruiters are required to ask about applicants' associations with extremist groups and criminal gangs during the initial appointment interview.[16] Navy and Marine Corps recruiters are not required by guidance to ask applicants about associations with extremist groups and criminal gangs during the initial appointment interview. See Appendix B for the extremism interview requirements for each Military Service.

[14] The 103 total comprises 58 Army applicants, 39 Air Force applicants, and 6 Space Force applicants in Table 6 who were screened before the implementation of the Army and Air Force screening form requirements.

[15] The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test evaluates specific aptitude areas and gives scores used for selecting and classifying individuals for the Armed Forces.

[16] Air Force recruiters conduct initial appointment interviews for both Air Force and Space Force applicants.

Table 7 summarizes the number of applicants we reviewed who Military Service recruiters screened for extremist and criminal gang behavior during the initial appointment interview.

Table 7. Applicants Interviewed for Extremism and Criminal Gang Behavior

Military Service	Total Sample Selection	Number of Applicants		
		Interviewed for Extremism and Criminal Gang Behavior	Not Interviewed for Extremism and Criminal Gang Behavior	Interviewed Before Requirement Implementation
Army	66	28[1]	30	8
Marine Corps	34	0[2]	0[2]	0[2]
Navy	28	0[2]	0[2]	0[2]
Air Force	76	38[3]	17	21
Space Force	20	10	6	4
Total	**224**	**76**	**53**	**33**

Note: The totals in the table do not equal 224 because Marine Corps and Navy applicants are not reflected in the table as their interview screening does not include interviewing for extremist or criminal gang associations.

[1] Two Army applicants responded "yes" to associations with extremist groups or criminal gangs. One applicant obtained a waiver and completed the accessions process. The Army suspended the second applicant from the accessions process.

[2] Marine Corps and Navy guidance do not require recruiters to ask applicants a specific question about extremist or criminal gang organization association. Instead, the Marine Corps and Navy use screening questionnaires to identify applicant behavior.

[3] One Air Force applicant responded "yes" to association with extremist groups or criminal gangs. The Air Force disqualified the applicant from the accessions process due to low test scores and closed the applicant's file.

Source: The DoD OIG.

Army

Army guidance requires recruiters to meet with applicants and ask about extremist behaviors during the initial appointment. In May 2021, the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Director Army Accessions, issued a memorandum directing that during the initial appointment, recruiters ask all applicants, "Have you ever had, or currently have, any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?"[17] The memorandum requires recruiters to annotate in the Army Recruiting Information Support System that recruiters asked the question about extremist or gang association, including the applicant's yes or no response. The memorandum advises that applicants who answer "yes" to the question fail to meet Army standards and require a waiver approved by the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command to be eligible for enlistment.

[17] Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff G-1, Director Army Accessions Memorandum, "Applicant Screening Check–Association with an Extremist/Hate Organization or Gang," May 27, 2021.

We reviewed the application packages for 66 Army applicants and determined Army recruiters annotated that 28 of 66 applicants were asked and responded to the question about extremist or gang association during the initial appointment interview, but recruiters did not annotate the question and response for 30 applicants.[18] Army recruiters interviewed the remaining eight applicants before the implementation of the Army requirement to ask about extremist or gang association during the initial appointment interview.

Of the 28 Army applicants with annotated interview responses, 26 applicants did not disclose associations with extremist organizations or gangs. However, 2 of the 28 Army applicants with annotated interview responses disclosed associations with extremist organizations or gangs.

- One Army applicant submitted and received approval for a waiver in accordance with DoD and Army guidance. The applicant's past included an arrest for spray painting buildings. The applicant was initially charged with street terrorism because one of the symbols painted was similar to a gang symbol. The arrest charge was later downgraded to vandalism because the applicant claimed to have not known it was a gang symbol and stated he had no affiliation with a gang. The Army approved the applicant's waiver request on November 17, 2021, and the applicant completed the accessions process on January 10, 2022.
- One Army applicant was suspended from continuing the Army's accessions process. According to Army recruiting officials, the applicant admitted to being a gang member and the Army did not conduct a suitability review because the Army was unable to obtain additional details from an external organization about the applicant's gang member association.

Army recruiters did not annotate asking the question about extremist or gang associations or the applicant's response during the initial appointment interview for 30 applicants because Army recruiters did not apply screening guidance. For example, during an initial interview appointment with an Army applicant on November 3, 2021, a recruiter did not annotate that the recruiter asked, or the applicant responded to, the question about extremist or gang associations.

Air Force and Space Force

Similar to the Army, the "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide" requires Air Force recruiters to ask about extremist behaviors during the initial appointment. Specifically, effective April 23, 2021, Air Force recruiters are required to ask applicants at the initial appointment interview,

[18] The 66 Army applicants comprise 64 statistically selected applicants and 2 additionally selected applicants. Table 3 shows the number of applicants selected for our sample.

"Have you ever had, or currently have, any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?"[19] Air Force guidance requires recruiters to annotate in the Air Force Recruiting Information Support System–Total Force (AFRISS-TF) that they asked the question about extremist or gang association and include the applicant's yes or no response. Applicants who answer "yes" to the question require a waiver approved by the squadron commander to continue processing for entry into the Air Force or Space Force.

We reviewed the application packages for 76 Air Force and 20 Space Force applicants and determined the following.[20]

- Air Force recruiters annotated that 38 of 76 Air Force applicants were asked and responded to the question about extremist or gang associations during the initial appointment interview, but did not annotate the question and response for 17 applicants. The remaining 21 applicants were interviewed before the implementation of the Air Force requirement to ask about extremist or gang associations during the initial appointment interview.
- Air Force recruiters annotated that 10 of 20 Space Force applicants were asked and responded to the question about extremist or gang associations during the initial appointment interview, but did not annotate the question and response for 6 applicants. The remaining four applicants were interviewed before the implementation of the Air Force requirement to ask about extremist or gang associations during the initial appointment interview.

One of the 38 Air Force and none of the 10 Space Force applicants with documented interview responses disclosed associations with extremist organizations or gangs. According to a recruiter's notes, the one Air Force applicant stated that he was a gang member for 13 years, had no current gang affiliation, and had no gang tattoos. The Air Force closed the applicant's file due to low test scores.

Recruiters did not annotate asking the question about extremist or gang associations or the applicant's response during the initial appointment interview for 17 Air Force and 6 Space Force applicants because Air Force recruiters did not consistently apply screening guidance. For example, during an initial interview appointment with a Space Force applicant on August 11, 2021, a recruiter did not annotate that the recruiter asked, or the applicant responded to, the question of extremist or gang associations. Air Force guidance requires recruiters to annotate that they asked the question about extremist or gang associations and include

[19] "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," version 1, July 2021.

[20] The 76 Air Force applicants comprise 49 statistically selected applicants and 27 additionally selected applicants. Table 3 shows the number of applicants selected for our sample.

the applicant's yes or no response, and AFRISS-TF includes a fillable template for recruiters to annotate initial comments after meeting an applicant. According to Air Force officials, recruiters who did not use annotation instead implemented the requirement by checking a yes or no box to indicate applicant extremist or gang associations in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab. However, the AFRISS-TF check boxes do not allow a recruiter to explain in an annotation that they asked the question or record the applicant's response. Air Force guidance does not include procedures or requirements for using the check boxes to annotate applicant extremist or gang associations.

Additionally, Air Force guidance requires recruiters to conduct Entering Active Duty Briefings with applicants before an applicant enters active duty. Air Force recruiters are required to ask applicants, "Have you ever had any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" during the Entering Active Duty Briefings.[21] In our sample, 41 Air Force applicants and 11 Space Force applicants entered active duty and we reviewed the associated Briefing forms.[22] Recruiters completed Entering Active Duty Briefings for:

- 41 of 41 Air Force applicants that completed the accessions process and entered active duty, and
- 11 of 11 Space Force applicants that completed the accessions process and entered active duty.

None of the 41 Air Force or 11 Space Force applicants responded as having associations with an extremist or hate organization or gang.

Marine Corps and Navy

Service-specific guidance for both the Marine Corps and Navy do not require recruiters to ask applicants a specific question about extremist or criminal gang organization associations during the initial appointment. Instead, the Marine Corps and Navy require aberrant behavior screening forms to identify and screen applicant behavior.[23] Based on our review of application packages for Marine Corps and Navy applicants, we determined that Navy recruiters collected the required forms in accordance with guidance but Marine Corps recruiters did not. See the screening questionnaire section of this report for detailed results.

[21] "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," version 1, July 2021.

[22] Tables 4 and 5 show the application status of applicants in our sample.

[23] The Marine Corps "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form" and the Navy "United States Navy Aberrant Behavior Screening Certificate" define aberrant behavior as involvement with groups or organizations advocating violence or illegal activities.

Recruiters Used Screening Questionnaires to Document Extremist and Criminal Gang Associations

Military Service recruiters used screening questionnaires and forms to document applicants' behaviors and ties to extremist groups and criminal gangs for 64 of 224 applicants we reviewed. Recruiters administered the questionnaires and forms to applicants to identify behavior not suitable for service. In April 2021, the Secretary of Defense directed the review and standardization of screening questionnaires to solicit information about extremist behavior from military applicants.[24] In December 2021, the Offices of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security developed standardized screening questions and directed the Military Services to include, by the end of February 2022, the questions in accessions interviews or questionnaires and to record applicants' responses in processing records.

In response, the Military Services each incorporated the standardized screening questions into their accessions screening processes. According to an official from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, each of the Military Services confirmed completion and met the implementation deadline to include the standardized screening questions in accessions processes. See Appendix C for the screening forms used by each Military Service to identify extremist and criminal gang behavior. Table 8 summarizes the number of applicants we reviewed who Military Service recruiters screened for extremist and criminal gang behavior using questionnaires or forms.

Table 8. Applicants Screened for Extremism and Criminal Gang Behavior Using Screening Questionnaires or Forms

Military Service	Total Sample Selection	Number of Applicants		
		With Evidence of Screening Using Questionnaires or Forms	Without Evidence of Screening Using Questionnaires or Forms	Screened Before the Requirement and Did Not Reach Screening Step
Army	66	8	0	58
Marine Corps	34	16	16	2
Navy	28	16	0	12
Air Force	76	18	19	39
Space Force	20	6	8	6
Total	**224**	**64**	**43**	**117**

Source: The DoD OIG.

[24] Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Department and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group," April 9, 2021.

Army

The Army screens applicants using the "Electronic National Screening Questionnaire." Effective January 31, 2022, the Army included the additional standardized background screening questions in the "Electronic National Screening Questionnaire." U.S. Army Recruiting Command Message 22-031 states that a "yes" answer to any question on the questionnaire requires a suitability review at the U.S. Army Recruiting Command level to determine enlistment eligibility.[25] Specifically, U.S. Army Recruiting Command Message 22-031 states that an extremist or affiliation suitability review requires a commander memorandum and recommendation "with the details as to when the extremist/ hate/gang affiliation took place, what organization they were affiliated with, attestation that they are no longer affiliated and why they were affiliated … ."

We reviewed the application packages for 66 Army applicants and determined that recruiters ensured 8 of 66 Army applicants completed the screening questionnaire for extremism and criminal gang activities. The remaining 58 Army applicants went to basic training or had their applications closed before the implementation of the Army screening form requirement. None of the eight Army applicants that completed the screening questionnaire disclosed extremist or criminal gang associations on the questionnaire.

Marine Corps and Navy

The Marine Corps screens enlisted applicants using the "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form," and officer applicants using the "Addendum to NAVMC 10418-1, Accession Screening Questionnaire." The Navy uses a similar "United States Navy Aberrant Behavior Screening Certificate," to determine enlistment eligibility. Both the Marine Corps and the Navy aberrant behavior forms were updated in January 2022, following the requirement to ask the standardized background screening questions. Both forms provide definitions for terms, such as "aberrant behavior" and "hate crimes." After defining the terms, the forms present a series of questions requiring yes or no responses for the applicant to complete and self-certify. The Marine Corps enlisted applicants also respond to four additional statements, such as "I have been or am now a member of a gang."[26] Both the Navy and Marine Corps screening forms require applicants to certify that their responses are honest and that applicants have not concealed any information. Marine Corps guidance specifies that applicants who are tentatively qualified after initial screening must complete the "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form." Navy guidance directs the use of the "United States Navy

[25] U.S. Army Recruiting Command Message 22-031, "Additional Background Screening Questions," January 28, 2022.

[26] U.S. Marine Corps, "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form."

Aberrant Behavior Screening Certificate" for all applicants entering the delayed entry program. Navy applicants who enlist for active duty join the delayed entry program until their date to report to Recruit Training Command.

The Marine Corps also requires enlisted applicants to complete the "Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities" statement of understanding, which outlines the Marine Corps policy on participation in such organizations. The document explains that any participation in criminal gangs or extremist groups, organizations, and activities is inconsistent with Marine Corps core values and clarifies that Marines are prohibited from actively participating in extremist activities or gangs and from advocating criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes. Marine Corps guidance specifies that applicants who are tentatively qualified after initial screening must complete the "Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities" statement of understanding form.

Additionally, the Marine Corps implemented the "Addendum to NAVMC 10418-1, Accession Screening Questionnaire," in January 2022 for officer applicants. The accession screening questionnaire asks the required standardized background screening questions, including whether an applicant has attempted to commit an act of treason, terrorism, or sedition against the United States, and whether the applicant committed a crime motivated by bias against race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Marine Corps guidance states that the "Addendum to NAVMC 10418-1, Accession Screening Questionnaire" is required at the time of contracting or service selection for officer applicants.[27]

We reviewed the application packages for 34 Marine Corps and 28 Navy applicants and determined the following.

- Marine Corps recruiters collected required forms for 16 of 34 Marine Corps applicants, but did not have required forms for 16 applicants. Specifically, recruiters did not have either the "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form" or the "Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities" form for 16 enlisted applicants. Of the remaining two applicants, one applicant is still in process and has not reached contracting or service selection, the point at which the screening forms are required. The other applicant withdrew the application before the implementation of the Marine Corps screening form requirement.

[27] Contracting is when an applicant enlists or reenlists in the Marine Corps or Marine Corps Reserve.

- Navy recruiters collected "United States Navy Aberrant Behavior Screening Certificate" forms for 16 of 28 Navy applicants. The remaining 12 Navy applicants did not reach the delayed entry program, the point at which the screening forms are required.

None of the 16 Marine Corps or 16 Navy applicants who completed the forms disclosed aberrant behavior or involvement in racially biased groups, gang-related violence, or hate crimes. Marine Corps recruiters did not collect the required screening forms for 16 Marine Corps applicants because Marine Corps recruiters did not apply screening guidance and did not have the forms on file for 3 of the 16 applicants. For example, the Marine Corps was unable to provide the "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form" for one Marine Corps applicant even though the individual completed the accessions process. According to Marine Corps officials, the missing documents had not been found as of October 2022. The Marine Corps disqualified the remaining 13 applicants and could not provide evidence of collecting the required applicant forms. Marine Corps guidance requires all accessions to complete both required screening forms.

Air Force and Space Force

Air Force recruiters document an applicant's suitability for service on the "Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment 'Former' Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations" form, developed in response to the requirement to ask the standardized background screening questions. The form has nine questions and requires the applicant to initial in "yes" or "no" boxes for questions such as:

- "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?";
- "Have you, either in person or via electronic communications, ever advocated for the denial of civil rights based on the supremacy of one race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability over another race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability?"; and
- "Have you, either in person or via electronic communications, ever committed or conspired to commit a crime motivated by bias against race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability?"[28]

[28] Department of the Air Force, Air Force Recruiting Service, "Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment 'Former' Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations," January 13, 2022.

We reviewed the application packages for 76 Air Force and 20 Space Force applicants and determined Air Force recruiters collected completed "Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment 'Former' Membership in Gangs or Extremist/ Hate Organizations" forms for:

- 18 of 76 Air Force applicants but did not collect forms for 19 applicants, and
- 6 of 20 Space Force applicants but did not collect forms for 8 applicants.

The remaining 39 Air Force and 6 Space Force applicants entered active duty or had applications that were closed before the implementation of the Air Force screening form requirement. None of the 18 Air Force applicants or 6 Space Force applicants who completed the "Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment 'Former' Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations" form disclosed extremist, hate, or criminal gang activities or behaviors.

Air Force recruiters did not collect completed screening forms for 19 Air Force and 8 Space Force applicants because Air Force recruiters did not apply screening guidance. For example, a recruiter did not collect a completed screening form for an Air Force applicant who entered active duty on January 18, 2022. According to Air Force officials, the applicant and recruiter did not complete the form, but the applicant was screened for extremist and gang associations on separate occasions and the applicant responded "no" each time. Air Force guidance states that recruiters will have all applicants who enter active duty starting January 18, 2022, complete the screening form.

Recruiters Screened Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Tattoos

Military Service recruiters assessed whether 120 of 224 applicants we reviewed had tattoos or body modifications, and screened tattoos and body modifications for location and content. Recruiters reviewed tattoo screening forms for tattoo and body modification location and content and viewed applicants' visible tattoos and body modifications. Recruiters do not ask applicants to undress to view tattoos; instead, a medical provider identifies and documents body marks, scars, and tattoos as part of the applicant's accession medical examination. The U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command provides medical examinations and enlistment qualification tests to applicants and assists the Services in ensuring applicants meet enlistment standards. According to officials at the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command, medical providers are not trained or responsible for identifying tattoos, brands, or piercings potentially connected to extremist

organizations or criminal gangs. Rather, physicians document what they see and return the findings to the Service Liaisons for assessment. See Appendix D for the forms used by each Military Service to screen for tattoos and body modifications.

According to the "Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces," recruiters may contact the FBI's Cryptology and Racketeering Records Unit for assistance identifying and analyzing questionable tattoos to determine potential meanings and significance. While the FBI is available to assist with tattoo analysis, we did not identify any instances where recruiters contacted the FBI for the 120 applicants who Military Service recruiters screened. Table 9 summarizes the number of applicants we reviewed who Military Service recruiters screened for extremist and criminal gang behavior using tattoo screening.

Table 9. Applicants Screened for Extremist and Criminal Gang Tattoos

Military Service	Total Sample Selection	Number of Applicants		
		Screened for Extremist and Criminal Gang Tattoos	Not Screened for Extremist and Criminal Gang Tattoos	Not Applicable – Who Did Not Reach the Tattoo Review Screening Step
Army	66	1*	0	0
Marine Corps	34	20	0	14
Navy	28	15	0	13
Air Force	76	66	10	0
Space Force	20	18	2	0
Total	**224**	**120**	**12**	**27**

Note: The totals in the table do not equal 224 because only one Army applicant is reflected in the table due to the Army's tattoo screening method to document prohibited tattoos rather than all tattoos.

Army guidance requires documentation for applicant tattoos that may be prohibited by policy. One Army applicant in our sample had a potentially prohibited tattoo identified and requested a policy exception; however, the applicant's policy exception was disapproved due to tattoo location.

Source: The DoD OIG.

Army

Army Regulation 670-1 states that extremist tattoos are prohibited anywhere on a Soldier's body and defines extremist tattoos or brands as "those affiliated with, depicting, or symbolizing extremist philosophies, organizations, or activities."[29] Army guidance requires documentation for applicant tattoos that may be prohibited by policy. An applicant with a tattoo reported as possibly prohibited

[29] Army Regulation 670-1, "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia," chapter 3-3, "Tattoo, Branding, and Body Mutilation Policy," January 26, 2021.

is required to receive an accessions determination review, which includes documenting a description of all existing tattoos and locations on the body, and approval of the exceptions to policy by the appropriate authorities.[30]

We reviewed the application packages for 66 Army applicants and determined that recruiters identified a potentially prohibited tattoo for 1 of 66 applicants and documented the tattoo for review and approval. The applicant required an exception to policy for a prohibited tattoo. However, the exception was not for an extremist or criminal gang tattoo or brand. The applicant requested an exception to policy for a large flower tattoo on his hand because Army Regulation 670-1 prohibits tattoos or brands of any kind on the head, face, or neck, below the wrist bone, or on the hands. The Commander, U.S. Army 1st Recruiting Brigade, disapproved the applicant's exception to policy request. Therefore, the applicant did not complete the Army's accessions process. Army recruiters did not identify or document potentially prohibited tattoos for the remaining 65 Army applicants.

Marine Corps

Applicants to the Marine Corps are required to complete either the "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Tattoo Screening Form" or the "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Officer Tattoo Screening Form." Both tattoo screening forms ask the applicant to reply to questions concerning the existence of tattoos, brands, or body ornamentation, placement on the body, and content and meaning. Some questions screen for extremist behaviors and ideologies by asking whether an applicant's tattoo, brand, or body ornamentation represents membership in a gang or extremist group, or discriminatory behavior. According to the tattoo screening forms, digital photos or drawn pictures are required, and all questionable body markings in regards to content, size, number, or location (current or removed) are forwarded to the appropriate authority for review and approval. Marine Corps recruiters review visible tattoos, as well as tattoo forms, to ensure compliance with the regulations or to determine if an applicant requires a Service-level review or waiver. Tattoos that are extremist, obscene, racist, or sexist in nature are prohibited. Marine Corps guidance states that applicants must complete the tattoo screening form before entering the delayed entry program or officer selection.

Marine Corps officer applicants are also required to complete the "Statement of Understanding, Marine Corps Officer Program Policy Concerning Tattoos, Branding, and Ornamentation" form. The statement of understanding form states that tattoos, brandings, mutilations, or ornamentations that are gang or extremist

[30] Appropriate authorities for making accession determinations vary and can include accessions recruiting battalion commanders, commanders for officer accessions, professors of military science, commandants of officer and warrant officer candidate programs, and the U.S. Military Academy Superintendent.

group related are prohibited. The statement of understanding form defines gang or extremist group markings to include any tattoos, brands, or ornamentation with anti-American content, or content associated with an extremist group, gang membership, or gang activity. Additionally, an officer applicant is required to sign the statement of understanding form to certify that the applicant understands the Marine Corps policy on tattoos, brands, and ornamentations.

We reviewed the application packages for 34 Marine Corps applicants and determined that Marine Corps recruiters conducted tattoo, brand, or body ornamentation screening for 20 of 34 Marine Corps applicants. The remaining 14 applicants had applications that were in process or closed and did not reach the screening step. None of the 20 Marine Corps applicants who recruiters screened for tattoo, brand, or body ornamentation had documented extremist or criminal gang-related tattoos on the tattoo screening form.

Navy

Similar to the Marine Corps, the Navy uses the "United States Navy Tattoo Screening Certificate" to conduct tattoo, body art, and branding screening for candidates who have tattoos. Navy screening guidance requires the applicant to submit a personal statement describing the content, meaning, or symbolism of each tattoo, body art, or brand and the rationale for obtaining each. Navy recruiters also take photographs for screening purposes. Navy guidance requires that applicants complete the tattoos, body art, and branding screening step before enlistment, which the Navy defines as entering the delayed entry program.

We reviewed the application packages for 28 Navy applicants and determined that Navy recruiters conducted tattoo, body art, and branding screening for 15 of 28 Navy applicants. The remaining 13 Navy applicants did not reach the tattoo, body art, and branding screening step. None of the 15 Navy applicants who were screened for tattoos, body art, and brands had documented extremist or criminal gang-related tattoos on the tattoo screening certificate. For example, one Navy applicant in our sample documented 19 tattoos on a tattoo screening certificate. Navy recruiters took photographs of each tattoo and obtained written description statements and tattoo meanings from the applicant. One of the applicant's tattoos was a Russian phrase. Navy recruiters researched the phrase using the internet and corroborated the meaning of the phrase provided by the applicant. Additionally, Navy recruiters requested and obtained approval for tattoo eligibility from the Commander, Navy Recruiting Command.

Air Force and Space Force

The Air Force uses Air Force Form 4428, "Tattoo/Brand/Body Marking Screening/Verification" to document location, description, size, shape, and meaning of body modifications.[31] Applicants must document and the squadron commander must approve all questionable tattoos, body piercings, and body modifications.[32] Applicants without questionable tattoos, body piercings, or other body modifications are not required to fill out Air Force Form 4428. Air Force guidance provides recruiters with a reference document concerning unauthorized or inappropriate tattoos and symbols and advises that the Air Force Office of Special Investigations maintains current information on gang and hate groups and related body markings. Air Force Form 4428 defines unauthorized content as "tattoos/brands/body markings anywhere on the body that are obscene, commonly associated with gangs, extremist, and/or supremacist organizations, or that advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination." Additionally, Air Force Form 4428 prohibits extremist or gang tattoos in and out of uniform.

We reviewed the application packages for 76 Air Force and 20 Space Force applicants and determined Air Force recruiters screened:

- 66 of 76 Air Force applicants for tattoos, brands, or body markings but did not screen the remaining 10 applicants, and
- 18 of 20 Space Force applicants for tattoos, brands, or body markings but did not screen the remaining 2 applicants.

None of the 66 Air Force applicants or 18 Space Force applicants who recruiters screened for tattoos, brands, or body markings had documented extremist or criminal gang-related tattoos. For example, one Air Force applicant required a completed Air Force Form 4428 for a questionable tattoo. However, the exception was not for an extremist or criminal gang tattoo or brand. The applicant had a neck tattoo, which the applicant described as a word in Japanese. The applicant was required to get approval for the neck tattoo because Air Force Instruction 36-2903 prohibits tattoos on the neck, specifically anything visible above the open collar uniform.[33] The recruiter took photographs of the neck tattoo, including a photograph with the applicant wearing a collared uniform shirt. According to the photograph, the applicant's neck tattoo was not visible above

[31] Air Force Form 4428, "Tattoo/Brand/Body Marking Screening/Verification," August 31, 2011.

[32] Air Force guidance does not define the term "questionable." Rather, recruiters are instructed to use the Air Force Standard Operating Procedural Guide and Air Force Instruction 36-2903, "Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel," January 28, 2021, to make determinations.

[33] Air Force Instruction 36-2903, "Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel," January 28, 2021.

the collared shirt. The Commander, 317th Recruiting Squadron, approved the applicant's tattoo form. The applicant completed the Air Force's accessions process and entered active duty in June 2022.

Recruiters did not screen 10 Air Force and 2 Space Force applicants for tattoos, brands, or body markings because recruiters did not apply screening guidance. For example, a recruiter did not document in the applicant's file whether one Air Force applicant had tattoos even though Air Force guidance requires recruiters to ask each applicant if they have any tattoos, body piercings, or other body modifications.

Recruiters Reviewed Applicant Fingerprint Check Results and Initiated Background Investigations

Military Service recruiters reviewed fingerprint check results for applicants' criminal history records for 129 of 224 applicants we reviewed. Additionally, Military Service recruiters submitted applicants' Standard Form 86, "Questionnaire for National Security Positions," to initiate the background investigation process for 136 of 224 applicants we reviewed. Military Service recruiters have limited responsibilities during the background investigation screening step because they are not investigators. Recruiters are limited to reviewing fingerprint check results to ensure the results are favorable, working with applicants to request waivers for instances where unfavorable results may be waived, and initiating the background investigation process.

According to the "Military Personnel and Extremist Ideologies" report, DoD policy maintains all applicants undergo an advanced fingerprint check, a background investigation, and completion of the Standard Form 86.[34] Federal Investigative Standards further require applicants undergo a Tier 3 background investigation to screen applicants for extremist ties using FBI investigative and criminal history files checks, terrorist and subversive activities checks, and local law enforcement agency checks.[35]

Additionally, DoDI 1304.26 provides fingerprint and background investigation requirements for all Military Services. The DoDI states an applicant may continue accession, including going to training, if a National Agency Check with Law and Credit or higher-level investigation was submitted. Additionally, the DoDI 1304.26

[34] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Report, "Military Personnel and Extremist Ideologies," January 2020. An advanced fingerprint check provides a preliminary review for any history of involvement with law enforcement, including the FBI.

[35] The Federal Investigative Standards established requirements for conducting background investigations to determine eligibility for suitability for U.S. Government employment, fitness to perform work for, and eligibility for access to classified information or to hold a sensitive position. Tier 3 is the investigation required for positions requiring access to confidential or secret information.

states an advanced fingerprint check must be conducted without identifying any disqualifying background information. If the National Agency Check with Law and Credit is completed after accession, any disqualifying information identified should be transmitted to the appropriate personnel or human resource offices, as determined by the Services, for action.

All Military Services require initiating background investigations before an applicant goes to basic training. Based on our conversations with recruiting officials, the background investigation can take significant time to complete and results are often not available until the applicant is at basic training. According to the recruiting officials and in accordance with DoDI 1304.26, any disqualifying information resulting from the background investigation is sent to the appropriate office responsible for the applicant at that time, not the recruiter.

In September 2021, the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command established an External Agency Administrative Hold in their information system. An External Agency Administrative Hold allows Recruiting Service headquarters to prevent applicants identified as potential risks by antiterrorism, investigation, or security agencies from further processing at the military entrance processing stations until the hold is cleared. According to U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command officials, the Services are able to see if an applicant has a current or cleared hold in the information system, and which Service placed the hold. Therefore, if an applicant were placed on hold by one Military Service and attempted to join another Service, recruiting officials would see the hold and the applicant would be unable to process at a military entrance processing station. Military Service recruiting officials reported using the External Agency Administrative Hold on six applicants since September 2021.[36]

For example, the Army placed an External Agency Administrative Hold on an applicant after the FBI confirmed the applicant engaged in ideological discussions consistent with racially motivated extremism on social media. The applicant also expressed a desire to join the Army to be with like-minded extremists. According to the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command, the applicant was still on hold as of July 2022.

[36] None of the applicants with External Agency Administrative Holds were in our sample.

Tables 10 and 11 summarize the number of applicants we reviewed who Military Service recruiters screened for extremist and criminal gang behavior using fingerprint check results and background investigations, respectively.

Table 10. Applicants Screened for Extremism and Criminal Gang Behavior Using Fingerprint Check Results

Military Service	Total Sample Selection	Number of Applicants		
		With Evidence from Recruiters of Fingerprint Check Results Retained	Without Evidence from Recruiters of Fingerprint Check Results Retained	Not Applicable – Who Did Not Reach the Fingerprint Check Screening Step
Army	66	56	0	10
Marine Corps	34	18	1	15
Navy	28	14	0	14
Air Force	76	30	12	34
Space Force	20	11	0	9
Total	**224**	**129**	**13**	**82**

Source: The DoD OIG.

Table 11. Applicants with Background Investigations Initiated

Military Service	Total Sample Selection	Number of Applicants		
		With Evidence from Recruiters of Initiating Background Investigation	Without Evidence from Recruiters of Initiating Background Investigation	Not Applicable – Who Did Not Reach the Background Investigation Screening Step
Army	66	41	0	25
Marine Corps	34	18	1	15
Navy	28	14	0	14
Air Force	76	52	0	24
Space Force	20	11	0	9
Total	**224**	**136**	**1**	**87**

Source: The DoD OIG.

Army

The Army requires all accessions to have a National Agency Check with Local Agency and Credit Check or higher personnel security investigation submitted. Fingerprint check results are required before entry into active duty, going

to training, or first duty assignment. We reviewed the application packages for 66 Army applicants and determined that recruiters reviewed fingerprint check results for 56 of 66 Army applicants. The remaining 10 applicants did not reach the fingerprint check screening step. Additionally, recruiters initiated the background investigation for 41 of 66 Army applicants. The remaining 25 applicants did not reach the background investigation screening step. None of the 56 Army applicants whose fingerprint check results were reviewed by recruiters had unfavorable results related to extremist or criminal gang associations.

Marine Corps

Marine Corps guidance states the Special Agreement Check and the Standard Form 86 are the two methods for verifying applicants' pre-accession arrest criminal history. The Special Agreement Check consists of a technical search of the FBI's criminal fingerprint search. All applicants must have a Special Agreement Check and the Standard Form 86 completed before accession.

We reviewed the application packages for 34 Marine Corps applicants and determined that recruiters reviewed fingerprint check results for 18 of 34 Marine Corps applicants, but did not for 1 applicant. The remaining 15 applicants did not reach the fingerprint check screening step. None of the 18 Marine Corps applicants whose fingerprint check results were reviewed by recruiters had unfavorable results related to extremist or criminal gang associations. Marine Corps recruiters did not apply screening guidance for one applicant, as the Marine Corps did not provide evidence of fingerprint check results for the applicant. According to Marine Corps officials, the missing documents had not been found as of October 2022. We contacted the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency and obtained the missing fingerprint check results confirming that the applicant was screened through a fingerprint check. The Marine Corps applicant did not have unfavorable fingerprint results related to extremist or criminal gang associations.

Additionally, recruiters initiated the background investigation for 18 of 34 Marine Corps applicants, but did not for 1 applicant. The remaining 15 applicants did not reach the background investigation screening step. Marine Corps recruiters did not apply screening guidance for one applicant because the Marine Corps did not provide evidence that the background investigation was initiated for the contracted applicant. Marine Corps guidance requires all applicants to have a background investigation completed at the time of contracting into the Armed Forces. However, the applicant's file did not contain documentation showing that the Marine Corps completed a background

investigation for the applicant. According to Marine Corps officials, the missing documents had not been found as of October 2022. We contacted the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency to verify that the Marine Corps initiated a background investigation for the applicant and confirmed that the applicant's background investigation was initiated.

Navy

The Navy requires security investigation requests to be submitted with fingerprints and the Standard Form 86. Navy policy states that applicants will not go to Recruit Training Command without an open or scheduled personal security investigation. We reviewed the application packages for 28 Navy applicants and determined that recruiters reviewed fingerprint check results and initiated the background investigation for 14 of 28 Navy applicants. The remaining 14 applicants did not reach the fingerprint check or background investigation screening step. None of the 14 Navy applicants whose fingerprint check results were reviewed by recruiters had unfavorable results related to extremist or criminal gang associations.

Air Force and Space Force

Air Force guidance states applicants' security investigations are submitted after they have qualified at a military entrance processing station. Recruiters are required to ensure applicants provide accurate information on the Standard Form 86. Applicants should have a scheduled security clearance investigation in order to go to training. Additionally, all qualified applicants must be fingerprinted with a copy of the results maintained in supporting documents.

We reviewed the application packages for 76 Air Force and 20 Space Force applicants and determined the following.

- Air Force recruiters reviewed fingerprint check results for 30 of 76 Air Force applicants, but did not provide evidence of fingerprint check results for 12 applicants. The remaining 34 applicants did not reach the fingerprint check screening step. Additionally, recruiters initiated the background investigation for 52 of 76 Air Force applicants. The remaining 24 applicants did not reach the background investigation screening step.
- Air Force recruiters reviewed fingerprint check results and initiated the background investigation for 11 of 20 Space Force applicants. The remaining 9 applicants did not reach the fingerprint check or background investigation screening step.

None of the 30 Air Force applicants or 11 Space Force applicants whose fingerprint check results were reviewed by recruiters had unfavorable results related to extremist or criminal gang associations.

Air Force recruiters did not apply screening guidance for 12 Air Force applicants, as the Air Force did not have evidence of fingerprint check results for the 12 applicants. For example, the Air Force was unable to provide evidence of fingerprint results for 12 Air Force applicants, all of whom entered active duty. Air Force guidance requires a copy of the fingerprint report in the supporting documents. However, according to Air Force officials, the external agency website containing the fingerprint check results for the 12 applicants shut down in July 2021. Air Force officials stated that files were not transferred to the new system, and fingerprint check results could no longer be accessed. We contacted the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency and obtained the missing fingerprint check results confirming that the 12 applicants were screened through a fingerprint check. None of the 12 Air Force applicants had unfavorable fingerprint check results related to extremist or criminal gang associations.

Recruiters Did Not Always Apply Screening Guidance

Military Service recruiters did not complete screening steps for some applicants because recruiters did not always apply screening guidance. For the applicants required to complete screening steps, Military Service recruiters did not:

Military Service recruiters did not complete screening steps for some applicants because recruiters did not always apply screening guidance.

- annotate that 53 applicants were asked and responded to initial appointment interview questions about extremist or criminal gang affiliation;
- administer screening questionnaires or forms for 43 applicants;
- implement tattoo and body modification review procedures for 12 applicants;
- provide fingerprint results for 13 applicants; or
- provide evidence that a background investigation was initiated for 1 applicant.

We found that Navy recruiters consistently applied screening guidance for the applicants we reviewed. However, we determined that Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force recruiters had instances where applicants were not screened because recruiters did not always apply screening guidance.

Therefore, we recommend that the Secretaries of the Military Departments issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process. We further recommend that the Secretaries of the Military Departments establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

Incomplete Screening Increases the Potential for Applicants with Extremist or Gang Associations to Join the Military Services

As a result of the Military Service recruiters not completing required applicant screening steps, recruiters may not identify all applicants with extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions screening process. Completing each accessions screening step for all applicants, in accordance with DoD and Military Service guidance, will assist recruiters in identifying applicants with extremist or criminal gang associations.

DoDI 1304.26 provides common entrance qualification standards for enlistment, appointment, and induction into the Military Services. Additionally, according to DoDI 1304.26, the Secretaries of the Military Departments are responsible for establishing procedures to ensure applicants meet standards. An applicant is eligible for the Military Services based on the ability to meet the standards, including character and conduct standards, to minimize the entrance of persons who are likely to become disciplinary cases, security risks, or who are likely to disrupt good order, morale, and discipline. Without complete screening, there is increased potential for applicants with extremist or criminal gang associations to join the Military Services, contributing to future security risks and disruptions to good order, morale, and discipline.

Without complete screening, there is increased potential for applicants with extremist or criminal gang associations to join the Military Services, contributing to future security risks and disruptions to good order, morale, and discipline.

Marine Corps Recruiting Command Plans to Take Actions to Prevent Future Screening Deficiencies

During our audit, we informed the Military Service recruiting organizations of instances where recruiters did not apply screening guidance to screen for extremist or gang associations and asked why recruiters did not apply guidance. In response, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G3 Operations, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, provided a Memorandum for the Record in October 2022 stating that the Marine Corps Recruiting Command recognized the deficiencies and shortfalls in the screening process. Additionally, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G3 Operations, stated that the Marine Corps Recruiting Command would take corrective action through detailed training and quality control supervision to prevent future errors.

Management Comments on the Finding and Our Response

Although not required to comment, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command Chief of Staff provided comments to the draft report finding. For the full text of comments from the Marine Corps Recruiting Command Chief of Staff, see the Management Comments section of the report.

Marine Corps Recruiting Command Chief of Staff Comments

The Marine Corps Recruiting Command Chief of Staff stated that the Component did not agree with the draft report. Specifically, the Chief of Staff stated that the Marine Corps has taken action to address the findings and recommendations by revising the Enlistment Processing Manual (Marine Corps Command Recruiting Order [MCRCO] 1100. lA) to address document tracking and retention. The response further indicated that the Marine Corps has also published the Total Force Recruiting Quality Control Order (MCRCO 1130. lA) to ensure that every application package is reviewed for missing documentation and, if found, has the information entered into the Quality Control Information System. The Chief of Staff stated that this information is made available to the Districts and Recruiting Stations on a monthly basis. In addition, the Chief of Staff provided additional proposed technical edits to the body of the report.

Our Response

We disagree with the Marine Corps Recruiting Command Chief of Staff's comments on the finding. The Marine Corps began revising MCRCO 1100.1A as a result of our findings and recommendations; however, as of July 5, 2023, the revised MCRCO

1100.1A was in staffing and had not been approved.[37] The official version of MCRCO 1100.1A, dated May 1, 2020, which we applied to the data in our sample, did not include the updates to address document tracking and retention. While MCRCO 1130.1A may include a requirement that directed recruiting officials to conduct a "review of applicants files for missing documentation" as outlined in our finding, we have identified instances where the Marine Corps did not implement the requirements. Therefore, we disagree with the Chief of Staff's assertion that the DoD OIG's findings and recommendations have been addressed. In addition, we considered the recommended changes to the body of the report and made minor edits to address the Marine Corps' comments.

Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response

Recommendation A.1

We recommend that the Secretary of the Army:

a. Issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

Secretary of the Army Comments

The Secretary of the Army agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Army will issue new guidance in July 2023 reiterating the importance of completing all screening steps.

Our Response

Comments from the Secretary addressed the specifics of the recommendation. In addition, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Military Personnel and Quality of Life) provided us a memorandum issued on July 10, 2023, to recruiting personnel that reiterated the importance of completing required steps, including interviews and all screenings. Therefore, the recommendation is resolved and closed.

b. Establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

[37] As of the issuance of this report, the Marine Corps had not issued the revised MCRCO 1100.1A.

Secretary of the Army Comments

The Secretary of the Army agreed with the recommendation, stating that on March 27, 2022, the Army established a system requirement that halts applicants and recruiters if the question related to extremism, hate organizations, or criminal gangs is not answered. In addition, if the applicant responds "yes," the process is stopped and a waiver is then required to continue enlistment. This application was implemented shortly after the completion of the audit. Also, the Secretary of the Army stated that Headquarters, Department of the Army, will establish periodic reviews of recruiter compliance to ensure the new electronic processes continue to run effectively and as intended, no later than October 1, 2023.

Our Response

Comments from the Secretary addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation once the Army provides a copy of its March 27, 2022 new system requirement that stops applicant progress if the question related to extremism, hate organizations, or criminal gangs is either not answered or answered "yes," and we verify that the Army established periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

Recommendation A.2

We recommend that the Secretary of the Navy:

a. Issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Manpower and Personnel) Comments

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Manpower and Personnel), responding for the Secretary of the Navy, agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs will issue a policy memorandum reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

Our Response

Comments from the Deputy Assistant Secretary addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation once the Navy provides a copy of the policy memorandum and we verify that it reiterates the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

b. Establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Manpower and Personnel) Comments

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Manpower and Personnel), responding for the Secretary of the Navy, agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Navy Recruiting Command and the Marine Corps Recruiting Command will update policies to include periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance. Also, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Manpower and Personnel) stated that periodic reviews will be implemented as part of the Navy and Marine Corps Command Inspection Program, in association with the screening of future Marines' and Sailors' records for tattoos, waivers, and accuracy.

Our Response

Comments from the Deputy Assistant Secretary addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation once the Navy provides a copy of updated Navy Recruiting Command and Marine Corps Recruiting Command policies and we verify that the updated policies require periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

Recommendation A.3

We recommend that the Secretary of the Air Force:

a. Issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

Air Force Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower, Personnel, and Services) Comments

The Air Force Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower, Personnel, and Services), responding for the Secretary of the Air Force, agreed with the recommendation. The Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated that the Air Force Recruiting Service Commander will send a memorandum to the recruiting force reiterating the importance of screening applicants and adhering to processing requirements to ensure accountability and compliance. In addition, the Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated that "the primary screening of applicants is now the Air Force Recruiting Service Disclosure Memorandum, which does not allow an applicant to enter the Delayed Entry Program without this memorandum being completed." Furthermore, the Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated that many of the audit findings noted discrepancies during Air Force Recruiting Service's transition from manual processes to implemented system changes. At that time, Air Force Recruiting Squadron Commanders had applicants complete Attachment 4-82, "Accessions Suitability for Service Agreement, Former Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations" during the initial assessment. The Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated that system changes implemented quality check controls to prevent applicants from reaching certain stages of the process without being screened. Additionally, the Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated that the Military Entrance Processing Station liaisons validate that screening is complete before initial processing. Finally, the recruiter's immediate supervisor validates that the Extended Active-Duty checklists are completed 7 days before accession.

Our Response

Comments from the Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation once the Air Force provides a copy of the policy memorandum, and we verify that it reiterates the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

b. Establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

Air Force Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower, Personnel, and Services) Comments

The Air Force Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower, Personnel, and Services), responding for the Secretary of the Air Force, agreed with the recommendation, stating that Flight Chiefs, U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command liaisons, and Squadron Operations conduct periodic reviews before a member enters active duty. Also, the Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff stated that the Air Force Recruiting Service Inspector General will evaluate compliance and efficacy of these quality control checks during the next round of Unit Effectiveness Inspections, tentatively scheduled for February or March 2024.

Our Response

Comments from the Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation once the Air Force provides a copy of Air Force Recruiting Service Inspector General Unit Effectiveness Inspections results and we verify that recruiters conducted quality control checks.

Finding B

Air Force Recruiters Entered Incorrect Data on Extremist and Gang Associations in AFRISS-TF

Air Force recruiters entered incorrect or unsupported data in the Air Force Recruiting Information Support System–Total Force (AFRISS-TF), indicating that 26 (34 percent) of 76 Air Force applicants in our sample disclosed extremist or gang associations. However, we determined that none of the 26 applicants disclosed extremist or gang associations, and Air Force recruiters continued processing the applicants for entry into the Air Force. Air Force recruiters stated that they mistakenly checked boxes on the AFRISS-TF demographics tab, indicating applicants had extremist or gang associations. In addition, AFRISS-TF did not automatically stop the accessions process when check boxes were marked to indicate applicant extremist or gang associations.

AFRISS-TF did not automatically stop the accessions process because AFRISS-TF lacked system controls. As a result, recruiters could allow applicants with potential extremist and gang associations to continue in the accessions process without obtaining approved eligibility determinations.[38] According to Air Force guidance, extremist and hate organization ideologies and affiliations are not consistent with the Air Force's core values and applicants who are associated with those beliefs or organizations are not suitable for service.

Air Force Recruiters Entered Incorrect Data for Applicant Extremist and Gang Associations and AFRISS-TF Did Not Automatically Stop the Accessions Process

Air Force recruiters entered incorrect or unsupported data in AFRISS-TF, indicating that 26 of 76 Air Force applicants in our sample disclosed extremist or gang associations. Based on a review of recruiter notes, we determined that none of the 26 applicants disclosed extremist or gang associations. Air Force recruiters stated that they mistakenly checked boxes on the AFRISS-TF demographics tab that indicated applicants had extremist or gang associations. In addition, AFRISS-TF did not automatically stop the accessions process when check boxes were marked to indicate applicant extremist or gang associations.

[38] Air Force guidance states that an eligibility determination is the process by which approval authorities review circumstances that place doubt on an applicant's suitability.

Air Force Recruiters Entered Incorrect or Unsupported Data in AFRISS-TF

Air Force recruiters entered incorrect or unsupported data in the AFRISS-TF, indicating that 26 of 76 Air Force applicants in our sample disclosed extremist or gang associations. We reviewed application packages for the Air Force applicants and determined that none of the 26 applicants disclosed extremist or gang associations. Air Force recruiters record an applicant's extremist or gang associations in AFRISS-TF in the following ways.

- Recruiters check a series of boxes, two of which relate to the applicant's extremist group and gang associations, in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab. The check boxes capture "yes" or "no" responses, indicating whether an applicant has extremist or gang associations. Figure 2 is an AFRISS-TF screenshot that shows check boxes the recruiter may complete during the initial appointment interview to identify an applicant's extremist or gang association.

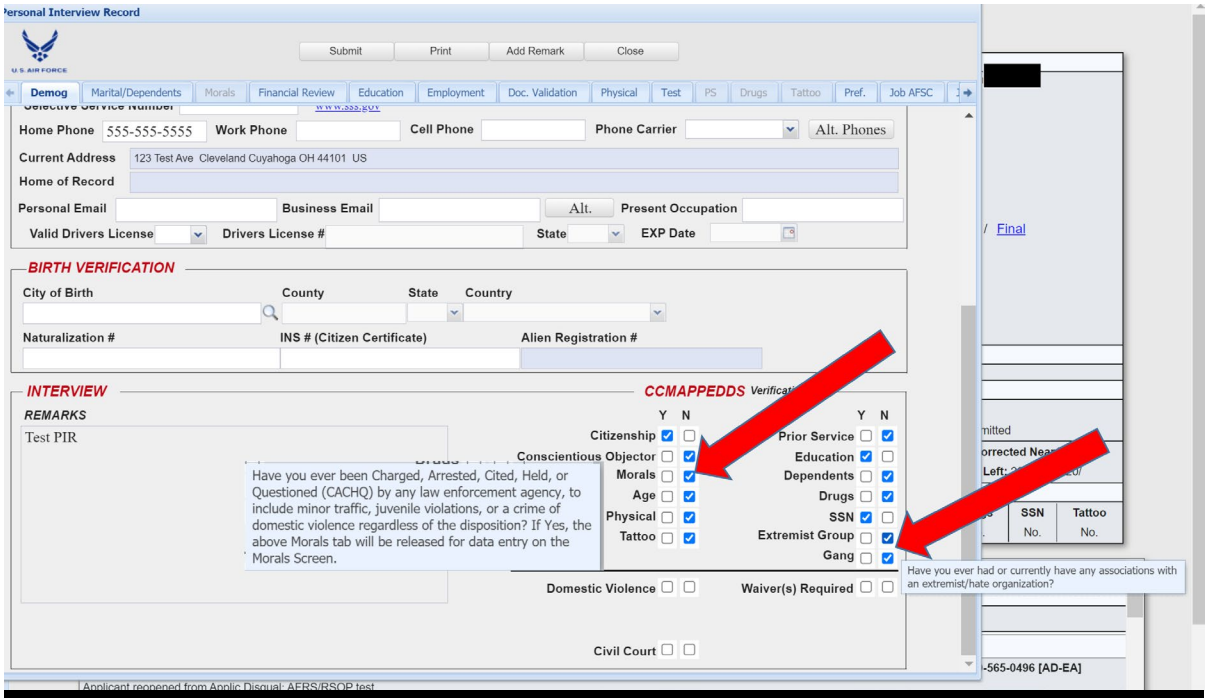


Figure 2. Air Force AFRISS-TF Screenshot with Check Boxes for Extremist Group and Gang Associations
Source: The Air Force.

- Recruiters annotate asking the question "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" and the applicant's response to the question, in accordance with Air Force guidance, in recruiter notes in the AFRISS-TF applicant summaries.[39] Figure 3 is an AFRISS-TF screenshot that shows the initial appointment interview template that recruiters use to annotate comments after meeting an applicant.

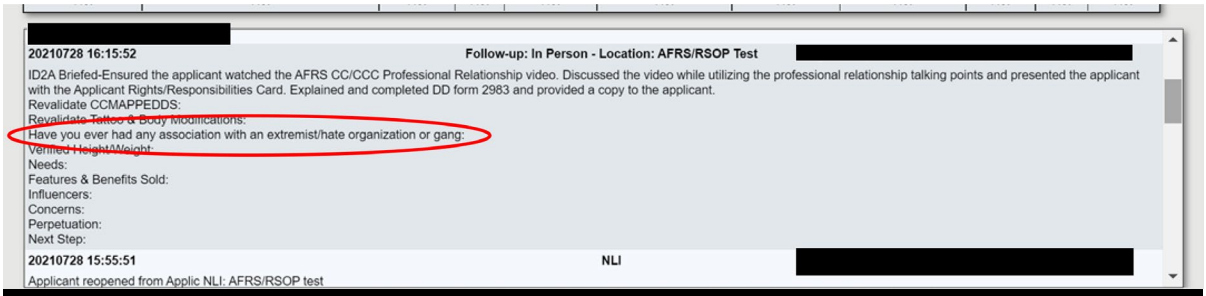


Figure 3. Air Force AFRISS-TF Screenshot of Template Used by Recruiters to Annotate Initial Appointment Interview
Source: The Air Force.

In contrast to the limited information provided by the check boxes, Air Force recruiters annotated multiple remarks and status updates in the AFRISS-TF applicant summaries documenting the applicant's accession process, including notes indicating that applicants did not disclose having extremist or gang associations. Unlike the check boxes in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab, we identified evidence that officials, such as flight chiefs, reviewed and commented on recruiter notes in the AFRISS-TF applicant summaries throughout the applicant's accession process. Recruiters also collected signed screening forms from applicants that did not disclose any extremist or gang associations.

For 26 of 76 Air Force applicants in our sample, we identified discrepancies between the "yes" check box responses recorded in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab and the annotated Air Force recruiter interview notes in the AFRISS-TF applicant summaries and signed screening forms. According to AFRISS-TF data provided by the Air Force, the 26 Air Force applicants had recorded check box responses of "yes," indicating the applicant had extremist or gang associations. However, we reviewed application packages for the 26 applicants and identified

[39] Air Force Recruiting Service, Operations Division (AFRS/RSO). "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," version 1, July 2021.

that none of the annotated interview notes or screening forms indicated that applicants responded "yes" to the question "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?"[40]

For the 26 Air Force applicants with identified discrepancies, we found the following.

- 21 applicants had an incorrect check box marked in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab, indicating the applicant had extremist or gang associations. However, recruiters annotated that the 21 applicants responded "no" to extremist or gang association, either during interviews or on screening forms.
- 5 applicants had an unsupported check box marked in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab, indicating the applicant had extremist or gang associations. However, recruiters did not annotate asking the question or the applicant's response in the interview notes we reviewed. All five applicants' files were closed for reasons not related to extremism or gang association, and the applicants did not progress past the initial interview.

We reviewed information, such as recruiter name and applicant home state, for the 26 Air Force applicants with incorrect or unsupported "yes" check box responses to extremist or gang association to determine whether there were similarities causing the discrepancies between the check boxes in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab and the recruiter's annotated interviews in AFRISS-TF applicant summaries. We did not identify similarities; rather, we determined that applicants represented 17 recruiting squadrons, had home addresses that spanned 17 states, and none of the 26 Air Force applicants had the same recruiter.

According to Air Force officials, recruiters mistakenly entered applicant information by checking the box when conducting the applicant's initial appointment interview. We asked the recruiters for the 26 Air Force applicants with incorrect or unsupported "yes" responses to extremist or gang association to determine the reasons recruiters entered "yes" in AFRISS-TF. Twenty recruiters responded and stated that they mistakenly checked the box when conducting the applicants' initial appointment interviews to indicate extremist or gang associations. None of the 20 recruiters that responded stated that the applicants disclosed having any extremist or gang associations.

[40] Air Force Recruiting Service, Operations Division (AFRS/RSO). "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," version 1, July 2021.

AFRISS-TF Did Not Automatically Stop the Accessions Process for Applicants

AFRISS-TF did not automatically stop the accessions process until obtaining squadron commander approval for applicant files that had extremist or gang association check boxes marked. According to information provided by the Air Force, any "yes" response to the extremist or gang check box should stop the accessions process until the response is resolved. However, for each of the 26 applicants, AFRISS-TF did not automatically stop the accessions process. Instead, Air Force recruiters continued processing the 26 applicants with "yes" check box responses to extremist or gang associations in the AFRISS-TF demographics tab for entry into the Air Force.

According to the "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," the squadron commander must approve an eligibility determination for applicants with disclosed extremist or gang associations to continue processing for entry into the Air Force or Space Force. Air Force guidance states that an eligibility determination is the process by which approval authorities review circumstances that place doubt on an applicant's suitability. A commander must make a waiver or eligibility determination when there are questions about a qualified applicant's suitability. However, because none of the applicants disclosed having extremist or gang associations, there was no reason for the recruiters to obtain squadron commander approval to continue processing applicants in the accessions process. Of the 26 applicants:

- 12 completed the accessions process; and
- 14 had closed applications for reasons not related to extremism or gang association, such as missing records or not meeting weight requirements.

AFRISS-TF Did Not Have System Controls in Place to Stop the Accessions Process

AFRISS-TF did not automatically stop the accessions process because AFRISS-TF did not have system controls in place to stop processing applicants until the squadron commander approved an eligibility determination. We met with Air Force Recruiting Service officials during our audit to discuss the reasons for the data entry discrepancies and the inability of AFRISS-TF to automatically stop the accessions process for applicants with the "yes" check box responses for reported extremist or gang associations. Air Force officials stated that the check box columns for extremist and gang association were new, and that a "yes" response in the extremist or gang association check boxes did not generate a hold in the system. Additionally, Air Force officials stated that personnel would not notice the "yes" check box responses unless someone was specifically looking for those responses.

Recruiters Could Allow Applicants with Extremist or Gang Associations to Continue in the Accessions Process Without Required Approvals

Without system controls in place in AFRISS-TF to automatically stop the processing of applicants with a "yes" response in the extremist or gang association check boxes, recruiters could allow applicants with potential extremist and gang associations to continue in the accessions process without required approvals.

Air Force recruiters are required to annotate in AFRISS-TF that an applicant was asked about extremist or gang associations and to include the applicant's yes or no response. Applicants who answer "yes" to the question require an eligibility determination approved by the squadron commander to continue processing for entry into the Air Force or Space Force. However, AFRISS-TF lacked system controls to automatically stop the accessions process until obtaining squadron commander approval. According to the "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," extremist and hate organization ideologies and affiliations are not consistent with the Air Force's core values and applicants who are associated with those beliefs or organizations are not suitable for service.

Without system controls in place in AFRISS-TF to automatically stop the processing of applicants with a "yes" response in the extremist or gang association check boxes, recruiters could allow applicants with potential extremist and gang associations to continue in the accessions process without required approvals.

Management Implemented AFRISS-TF System Controls

Air Force Recruiting Service officials implemented an AFRISS-TF system change request to prevent applicants from progressing without required approval.

During the audit, we informed Air Force Recruiting Service officials of the data entry discrepancies regarding applicants' extremist and gang associations. Air Force officials agreed with our conclusion that a "yes" response in the extremist or gang association check boxes did not generate a hold in the system. In response, Air Force Recruiting Service officials implemented an AFRISS-TF system change request to prevent applicants from progressing without required approval. AFRISS-TF system updates released on September 8, 2022, included a quality control validation error that generates when an applicant has the "yes" box checked for extremist

or gang association. Specifically, the error message states, "A Service Eligibility Determination will need to be approved in order to process this applicant." According to Air Force officials, the system change prevents applicants with "yes" responses to extremist or gang associations from advancing to the next step without an approved eligibility determination. Air Force guidance states that an eligibility determination is the process by which approval authorities review circumstances that place doubt on an applicant's suitability. A commander must make a waiver or eligibility determination when there are questions about a qualified applicant's suitability. Figure 4 is an example of the updated AFRISS-TF quality control validation errors screen.

Because the Air Force Recruiting Service took action to address the identified internal control weakness, we did not make a recommendation to automate a process to stop the accessions process when a check box is marked indicating that an applicant has potential extremist or gang associations.

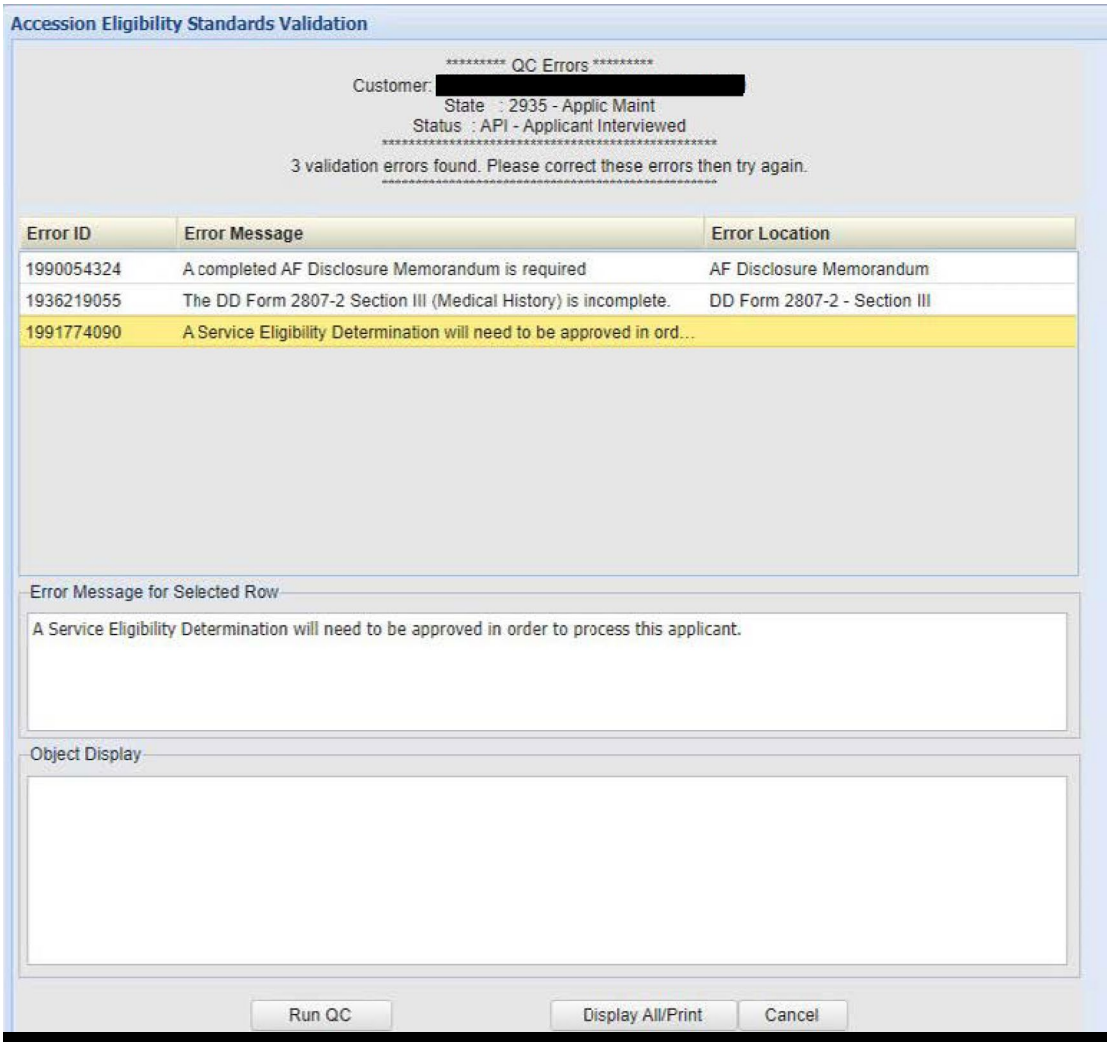


Figure 4. Air Force AFRISS-TF Screenshot of Quality Control Validation Errors
Source: The Air Force.

Appendix A

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit from January 2022 through April 2023 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Military Service Applicant Screening Guidance

To learn about the Military Service applicant screening process, we reviewed the following guidance.

- Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Department and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group," April 9, 2021
- Department of Defense, "Report on Countering Extremist Activity Within the Department of Defense," December 20, 2021
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, "Military Personnel and Extremist Ideologies," January 2020
- DoD Instruction 1304.26, "Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction," March 23, 2015 (Incorporating Change 3, October 26, 2018)
- DoD Instruction 1325.06, "Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces," November 27, 2009 (Incorporating Change 2, December 20, 2021)
- Army Regulation 601-210, "Regular Army and Reserve Components Enlistment Program," August 31, 2016
- Army Regulation 670-1, "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia," January 26, 2021
- Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff G-1, Director Army Accessions Memorandum, "Applicant Screening Check–Association with an Extremist/Hate Organization or Gang," May 27, 2021
- Marine Corps Recruiting Command Order 1100.1A, "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Enlistment Processing Manual," May 1, 2020
- Marine Corps Command Recruiting Order 1100.2A, "Marine Corps Recruiting Command Officer Commissioning Manual," January 11, 2016

- Navy Administrative Message 082-16, "Navy Tattoo and NWU Type II and III Ball Cap Policy Change," March 31, 2016
- Commander Navy Recruiting Command Instruction 1130.8L, "Navy Recruiting Manual–Enlisted," June 30, 2021
- Commander Navy Recruiting Command Instruction 1131.2G CH-3, "Navy Recruiting Manual–Officer," June 14, 2018
- "Air Force Recruiting Service Standard Operating Procedural Guide," version 1, July 2021
- Air Force Manual 36-2032, "Military Recruiting and Accessions," September 27, 2019
- Air Force Instruction 36-2903, "Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel," January 28, 2021
- Air Force Instruction 51-508, "Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly of Air Force Personnel," October 12, 2018
- Air Force Recruiting Service Notice to Airmen 21-09, "Applicant Suitability Check–Association with an Extremist/Hate Organization or Gang," April 23, 2021
- Air Force Recruiting Service Notice to Airmen 22-05, "Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment, 'Former' Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations," January 13, 2022

Sample Selection of Applicants to the Military Services

We obtained data from the Military Service recruiting organizations for applicants participating in the accessions process from July 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022. We used a statistical stratified attribute sampling selection methodology with a 90 percent confidence level and 5 percent precision to select our sample. We calculated the required sample sizes from each Military Service stratum based on the total applicant population of all Military Services. We used the RAND() function in Microsoft Excel to randomize the population in each Military Service stratum and select the sample. The results of the statistical sample analysis can be projected to the population from which it was mathematically selected, with confidence bounds and point estimates calculated. However, for the purposes of this audit, the sample results will not be projected because our audit universe consists of Military Services' applicant data, which does not contain any relevant information to project on the results of the recruiters' screening process.

Table 12 shows the applicant population and statistical sample size by Military Service.

Table 12. Statistical Sample: Applicant Population and Sample Size by Military Service

Military Service	Population Size	Sample Size
Army	70,715	64
Marine Corps	37,304	34
Navy	30,402	28
Air Force	54,536	49
Space Force	745	20
Total	**193,702**	**195**

Source: The DoD OIG.

Additionally, applicant data we received from the Army and Air Force included recorded "yes" or "no" responses to the question "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" We identified 29 individuals in the Army and Air Force data with "yes" responses for association with extremist or hate organizations or gangs. The Marine Corps and Navy recruiting information system data did not include a separate column with applicants' responses to whether or not they had participated in an extremist or hate organization or gang. Marine Corps and Navy guidance do not require recruiters to ask applicants a specific question about extremist or criminal gang organization association. Instead, the Marine Corps and Navy use screening questionnaires to identify applicant behavior.

In addition to the sample of 195 applicants, we reviewed all 29 individuals with "yes" responses to the question of association with extremist or hate organizations or gangs. Table 13 shows the additionally selected 29 individuals with associations to extremist, hate organizations, or criminal gangs according to data from the Military Services.

Table 13. Additionally Selected Individuals with "Yes" Responses to "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?"

Military Service	Individuals with Extremist, Hate Organization, or Criminal Gang Associations in Recruiting Information System Data
Army	2
Marine Corps	0
Navy	0

Table 13. Additionally Selected Individuals with "Yes" Responses to "Have you ever had or currently have any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" (cont'd)

Military Service	Individuals with Extremist, Hate Organization, or Criminal Gang Associations in Recruiting Information System Data
Air Force	27
Space Force	0
Total	**29**

Source: The DoD OIG.

Interviews, Documentation, and Analysis

To determine the actions the Military Service recruiting organizations took to screen applicants with extremist and criminal gang behavior, we took the following steps.

- Obtained DoD-wide and Service-level policies and procedures related to applicant screening for extremist and criminal gang behavior or ideologies.
- Compared and contrasted Service-level policies, procedures, and screening questionnaires to identify the similarities and differences in applicant screening processes.
- Reviewed applicant screening questionnaires or forms used to identify extremist and criminal gang behavior or ideologies.
- Collected data since the Secretary of Defense's April 9, 2021 memorandum, including: number of overall applicants to the Military Services, and number of applicants disqualified from entering the Services because of suspected extremist or criminal gang behavior or ideologies.
- Interviewed DoD officials concerning DoD-wide policies and procedures for applicants to the Military Services to determine roles and responsibilities related to recruiting and identifying extremist or criminal gang behavior or ideologies in applicants, including:
    - Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Accessions Policy;
    - U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command; and
    - Service-level recruiting organizations for the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force.
- Inquired whether the Military Services each had a definition of "extremist or criminal gang behaviors or ideologies" or whether they are using a common DoD definition.

- Reviewed applicant recruiting records to determine compliance with DoD and Military Service screening policies and procedures. For the applicants in the sample, we:
  - reviewed whether recruiters documented applicant interviews and applicant responses concerning extremist and criminal gang behaviors or ideologies, in accordance with applicable policies and procedures;
  - analyzed applicant-completed screening questionnaires for moral character and behavior and identified instances in which applicants participated in past or current questionable behavior;
  - requested and analyzed any waivers and determined if a waiver was submitted and approved in accordance with applicable Service-level policies and procedures;
  - interviewed Service-level recruiting officials to understand the processes and procedures for approving waivers;
  - analyzed tattoo screening forms and compared tattoos, brandings, or body ornamentation indicated on the forms to the DoD or Military Services' lists of unauthorized markings and Service-level policies and procedures; and
  - identified instances in which tattoos, brandings, or body ornamentation required review and approval, reviewed the documentation and justification for review and approval, and determined whether the Services sent questionable tattoo images to the FBI for review, in accordance with Service-level policies and procedures.
- Inquired about DoD and Military Service recruiting information systems to determine:
  - content of information maintained in the systems;
  - who is able to access the systems for information-sharing (for example, recruiters across all Services, recruiters in one Service, recruiters at a particular location);
  - whether applicants with suspected extremist or criminal gang behavior/ideologies were identified in the systems; and
  - whether data were accessible to all Military Services to prevent disqualified applicants with suspected extremist or gang behavior or ideologies from attempting to join other Military Services.

Internal Control Assessment and Compliance

We assessed internal controls and compliance with laws and regulations necessary to satisfy the audit objective. In particular, we assessed control environment, risk assessment, and control activities components. We reviewed the control environment regarding the assignment of responsibilities to screen applicants for extremist and gang associations. We reviewed Military Service recruiting organizations' risk identification, analysis, and response to applicants with suspected extremist or gang associations. We also assessed the Military Service recruiting organizations' implementation of control activities related to screening applicants for extremist or gang associations. Specifically, we reviewed policies and procedures, and the implementation of applicant screening steps by the Military Services. However, because our review was limited to these internal control areas, it may not have disclosed all internal control deficiencies that may have existed at the time of this audit.

Use of Computer-Processed Data

We relied on computer-processed data to select our audit sample. The Military Services provided us with data from the Army Recruiting Information System Support, the Navy Personalized Recruiting for Immediate and Delayed Enlistment Modernization system, the Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System, and AFRISS-TF. Specifically, the recruiting organizations from the Military Services provided us with applicant data from the recruiting information systems for the period July 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022, from which we selected the audit sample. After selecting the sample, we requested application packages for the individuals in our sample and compared information in the packages against the information in the data. Because we only relied on the data for sample selection, we concluded that the data were reliable for the purpose of this audit.

Use of Technical Assistance

We received assistance from the DoD OIG Quantitative Methods Division to select a statistical sample of Military Services applicants to use for the audit.

Prior Coverage

During the last 5 years, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued one report discussing the Armed Forces' tattoo policies for recruits and Service members. Unrestricted GAO reports can be accessed at http://www.gao.gov.

GAO

Report No. GAO-22-105676, "Military Personnel: Armed Forces Should Clarify Tattoo Policies' Waiver Guidance," August 17, 2022

The GAO found that each of the Armed Forces allowed recruits to obtain waivers for certain tattoo restrictions, but the policies did not always mention or provide clear guidance on waiver requirements. The GAO determined that clear guidance on waivers for unauthorized tattoos would provide consistent information about requirements for waiver requests and conditions for approval. The GAO recommended that the Armed Forces update tattoo policies to document whether waivers were available for recruits and Service members, and provide clear guidance on eligible tattoos and requirements for requesting a waiver.

Appendix B

Military Service Initial Appointment Interview Requirements to Identify Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior

Military Service	Extremism/Criminal Gang Question Required at Initial Appointment Interview	Requirement
Army	Yes	Army recruiters must ask, "Have you ever had, or currently have, any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" during the initial appointment interview.
Marine Corps	No	Marine Corps guidance does not require recruiters to ask applicants a specific question about extremist or criminal gang organization affiliation during the initial appointment interview. Instead, Marine Corps recruiters use screening questionnaires to identify applicant behavior, such as whether an applicant is or has been a gang member, has been cited for a hate crime, has participated in treason, terrorism, or advocated to overthrow the U.S. Government.
Navy	No	Navy guidance does not require recruiters to ask applicants a specific question about extremist or criminal gang organization affiliation during the initial appointment interview. Instead, Navy recruiters use screening questionnaires to identify applicant behavior, such as whether an applicant is or has been a member of a racially biased group or a gang, committed violent acts against a person of a different race, been cited for a hate crime, or advocated the degradation of other cultures.
Air Force and Space Force	Yes	Air Force recruiters must ask, "Have you ever had, or currently have, any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" during the initial appointment interview. Air Force guidance also requires recruiters to conduct Entering Active Duty Briefings before an applicant enters active duty to include a 30-day, 15-day, and final departure briefing. Applicants are asked, "Have you ever had any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?" as part of the briefings.

Source: The DoD OIG.

Appendix C

Military Service Screening Form Requirements on Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior

Military Service	Extremism/ Criminal Gang Screening Form Required	Form Used by the Military Service
Army	Yes	Electronic National Screening Questionnaire
Marine Corps	Yes	Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities Statement of Understanding Addendum to NAVMC 10418-1, Accession Screening Questionnaire
Navy	Yes	United States Navy Aberrant Behavior Screening Certificate
Air Force and Space Force	Yes	Accessions Suitability for Service Assessment "Former" Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations

Source: The DoD OIG.

Appendix D

Military Service Tattoo and Body Modification Screening Requirements

Military Service	Documentation Required to Screen for Tattoo and Body Modifications	Form Used by the Military Service*
Army	Documentation required for potentially prohibited tattoos	The Army does not have a unique form for tattoos or body modifications. Potentially prohibited tattoos and the location on the body are reviewed by approval authorities to make determinations as to whether such are prohibited.
Marine Corps	Tattoo Screening Form required for all applicants Statement of Understanding required for officer applicants	Marine Corps Recruiting Command Tattoo Screening Form Marine Corps Recruiting Command Officer Tattoo Screening Form Statement of Understanding, Marine Corps Officer Program Policy Concerning Tattoos, Branding, and Ornamentation
Navy	Form required for applicants with tattoos	NAVCRUIT 1130/104, United States Navy Tattoo Screening Certificate
Air Force and Space Force	Form only required for "questionable" tattoos	AF 4428, Tattoo/Brand/Body Marking Screening/Verification

* Medical providers document an applicant's medical examination, which includes tattoo and body mark identification, on DD Form 2808, "Report of Medical Examination," and UMF 40-1-18, "Tattoos/Brands/Piercing/Ear Gauging/Scars/Birthmarks." The forms in this table are Service-specific forms that recruiters use to screen for tattoo and body marking content.

Source: The DoD OIG.

Management Comments

Army

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

12 JUN 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR The Inspector General, Department of Defense, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

SUBJECT: Department of Defense Office of Inspector General Draft Report: Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior

1. Thank you for the opportunity to review the subject draft audit report.

2. The Army concurs with the recommendations of the draft report and provides the following comments:

a. Recommendation 1a: Issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

(1) The Army will reiterate the importance of completing all screening steps by updating the initial guidance mentioned in this audit. The new guidance will be published by 1 July 2023 to the recruiting force.

b. Recommendation 1b: Establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

(1) On 27 March 2022, the Army established a requirement that halts applicants and recruiters if the question related to extremism, hate organizations, or criminal gangs is not answered. If the applicant responds "yes," the process is stopped, as a waiver is then required to continue enlistment. This application was implemented shortly after the completion of the audit. Headquarters, Department of the Army will establish periodic reviews of recruiter compliance to ensure the new electronic processes created continue to run effectively and as intended no later than 1 October 2023.

3. Please contact [redacted]

Christine E. Wormuth

Navy Military Manpower and Personnel

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
(MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS)
1000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

23 May 2023

MEMORADUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INSPECTOR GENERAL

SUBJECT: Department of the Navy Comments for Department of Defense Inspector General Project D2022-D000RG-0052.000

The below response is provided to support the draft Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General Project D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior."

RECOMMENDATION A.2.a. Recommend that the Secretary of the Navy issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang activity during the accessions process.

RESPONSE: Concur. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASN(M&RA)) will issue a policy memorandum reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process. Estimated completion date: June 30, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION A.2.b. Recommend that the Secretary of the Navy establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

RESPONSE: Concur. Navy Recruiting Command and the Marine Corps Recruiting Command will update their policies to include periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance. Periodic reviews will be implemented as part of the Navy and Marine Corps Command Inspection Program, in association with the screening of future Marines and Sailors' records for tattoos, waivers, and accuracy. Estimated completion date: August 31, 2023.

There was no Controlled Unclassified Information within the report. Additional comments from Marine Corps Recruiting Command are provided in the attached for consideration. The point of contact for this audit is [redacted]

TRUESDALE.LISA [redacted]

Lisa M. Truesdale
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy
(Military Manpower and Personnel)

Attachment: As stated

Air Force Manpower, Personnel, and Services

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

10 July 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM: AF/A1

SUBJECT: Air Force Response to DoD Office of Inspector General Draft Report, "Audit of the Military Services Recruiting Organizations' Effort to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior" (Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000)

1. This is the Department of the Air Force response to the DoDIG Draft Report, "Audit of the Military Services Recruiting Organizations' Effort to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior" (Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000). HAF/A1 concurs with the report as written, with justification below, and welcomes the opportunity to continue discussions on this topic, if requested.

2. HAF/A1P, in coordination with Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS), will correct issues identified in this report, and develop and implement a corrective action plan outlined in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: The DODIG recommends the Air Force issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations during the accessions process.

AIR FORCE RESPONSE: The Air Force concurs with this recommendation. The Air Force Recruiting Service Commander will send a memo to the Recruiting force reiterating the importance of screening applicants and adhering to processing requirements to ensure accountability/compliance. The primary screening is now the AFRS Disclosure Memo which does not allow an applicant to enter the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) without this memo being accomplished (Tab 2). Many of the audit findings noted discrepancies during AFRS's transition from manual processes to implemented system changes. At that time, Air Force Recruiting Squadron Commanders had applicants complete Attachment 4-82, *Accessions Suitability for Service Agreement, Former Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations* with their recruiter during the initial assessment (Tab 3). New system changes implemented quality check controls to prevent applicants from reaching certain stages of the process without being screened. Additionally, the Military Entrance Processing Station liaisons validates screening is complete prior to initial processing. Finally, the recruiter's immediate supervisor (i.e., Flight Chief) validates the Extended Active-Duty checklists are completed 7 days prior to accession.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The DODIG recommends the Air Force establish and implement requirements in Service-specific policies for periodic reviews of recruiter compliance with

Air Force Manpower, Personnel, and Services (cont'd)

required accessions screening procedures to ensure recruiters screen applicants for extremist and criminal gang associations in accordance with guidance.

AIR FORCE RESPONSE: The Air Force concurs with this recommendation. Periodic reviews are conducted by Flight Chiefs, MEPS liaisons, and Squadron Operations prior to the member entering active duty. AFRS/IG will evaluate compliance and efficacy of these quality control checks during the next round of Unit Effectiveness Inspections (UEI) estimated Feb/Mar 2024.

3. The AF/A1 point of contact [redacted]

SCHEINER.GLENDA.[redacted]

GLENDA H. SCHEINER, SES, DAF
Acting Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff,
Manpower, Personnel and Services

Attachments:
1. Air Force Recruiting Service Disclosure Memorandum
2. 4-82, Accessions Suitability for Service Agreement, Former Membership in Gangs or Extremist/Hate Organizations

2

Army Military Personnel and Quality of Life

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
111 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-0111

SAMR-MP (RN 600) 10 July 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR

U.S. Army Recruiting Command, 1307 Third Avenue, Fort Knox, KY 40121-2725
Commander, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 950 Jefferson Avenue, Fort Eustis, VA 23604-5700
Director, Army National Guard, 111 South George Mason Drive, Arlington, VA 22204-1373

SUBJECT: Applicant Screening Check – Association with Extremist/Hate Organizations or Gangs

1. Reference. Memorandum, Secretary of Defense, 9 April 2021, subject: Immediate Action to Counter Extremism in the Department and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group.

2. Extremist and hate organization ideologies and affiliations are antithetical to Army core values. It is important to follow all the required steps for screening applicants for extremist, hate and criminal gang associations during the accessions process. This includes but is not limited to interviews, and tattoo and background screenings. Applicants associated with these beliefs and/or organizations are neither permitted nor suited to access in the United States Army.

3. In response to the reference above, all applicants will be asked the following question during the initial appointment, while conducting an applicant suitability check, “Have you ever had or do you currently have, any association with an extremist/hate organization or gang?”

a. Recruiters will annotate the applicant's response of “Yes” or “No” in the Army Recruiting Information Support System (ARISS).

b. Applicants answering “Yes” will require a suitability screening review and approval. Approval will be from the Commanding General of USAREC or the Director, Army National Guard.

4. This additional screening question became mandatory for all applicants processed after 27 May 2021. It will continue to be included until further notice.

5. The point of contact for [redacted]

ANGERS.JEFFREY [redacted]

JEFFREY P. ANGERS
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Military Personnel and Quality of Life)

Marine Corps Recruiting Command

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION
DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE

COMPONENT COORDINATOR RESPONSE

May 1, 2023

SUBJECT: DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

On behalf of my Component, my formal response to this issuance is: Nonconcur. Below are comments that detail my Component's objections to this issuance.

The Marine Corps has taken action on the DODIG findings and recommendations by revising the Enlistment Processing Manual (MCRCO 1100.1A) to address document tracking and retention. The Marine Corps has also published the Total Force Recruiting Quality Control Order (MCRCO 1130.1A) to ensure that every application package is reviewed for missing documentation and if found entered into the Quality Control Information System. This information is made available to the Districts and Recruiting Stations on a monthly basis. My point of contact for this action is [redacted]

X [signature]
Double-click the 'X' to insert a digital signat..
or print and sign a hard copy.

Coordinating Official's Name: [redacted]
Coordinating Official's Position Title: Marine Corps Recruting Command Chief of Staff
Coordinating Official's Component: United States Marine Corps

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **SELECT A CLASSIFICATION**

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (cont'd)

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION

DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCUR?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
	1	16	3	☒	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: The report states that Navy and Marine Corps recruiters are not required by guidance to ask applicants about associations with extremist groups during the initial appointment interview and then directs the reader to see appendix B for extremism interview requirements where the footnote describes the Navy and Marine Corps use of screening questionaires. The screening process for the Marine Corps is continuous throughout the enlistment process. The reader should be introduced to the Navy and Marine Corps screening process in the body of the report without needing to navigate to footnotes. **Coordinator Recommended Change**: Navy and Marine Corps recruiters are not required at the onset to ask applicants about associations with extremist groups and criminal gangs during the initial appointment interview. However, the Marine Corps and Navy requires formal screening questionnaires to be completed prior to processing at MEPS. **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	[redacted]
	2	21	2	☒	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: The report states that the Marine Corps recruiters did not collect the required forms in accordance with guidance and then directs the reader to see the screening questionnaire section of the report. The screening questionnaire section references the Marine Corps policy to destroy the records of those applicants found disqualified at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). Although the Marine Corps was not able to provide the records for those disqualified the reader should not be lead to believe the Marine Corps recruiter did not collect the required forms prior to screening at the MEPS.	[redacted]

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **REPLACES SD FORM 818, WHICH IS OBSOLETE**

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION 2

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (cont'd)

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION

DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCUR?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
					Coordinator Recommended Change: Based on our review of application packages for Marine Corps and Navy applicants, we determined that Navy recruiters collected the required forms in accordance with guidance, but Marine Corps recruiters could not provide evidence of collecting the required applicant forms for disqualified applicants because Marine Corps guidance requires recruiters to destroy files once disqualified for enlistment. **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	
	3	22		☒	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: The fourth column in Table 8 is labeled "Not Screened Using Questionairres or Forms". This terminology leads the reader of the report to assume the Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force did not screen applicants for extremism; however, on page 24 and 25 of the report the DODIG states that the Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force recruiters did not collect and retain the screening questionaires or forms on the applicant and does not infer the applicants were not screened in accordance with Service guidance. **Coordinator Recommended Change**: Change the title of the fourth column title to "Screening Questionaires or Forms not collected or retained" **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	[redacted]

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **REPLACES SD FORM 818, WHICH IS OBSOLETE**
SELECT A CLASSIFICATION 3

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (cont'd)

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION

DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCUR?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
	4	23	2	☒	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: On page 23, the report incorrectly states that the Marine Corps does not specify when enlisted applicants are required to complete the Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form. Marine Corps guidance requires all recruiters and applicants to complete the Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form before becoming a New Working Applicant (NWA). After verifying completion of the screening form, the SNCOIC will communicate with the Operations Officer to have the status of the applicant deliberately changed from prospective applicant to NWA in the Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System. This action is completed before the Operations Officer schedules an appointment at the Military Entrance Processing Station. **Coordinator Recommended Change**: Marine Corps guidance specifies that applicants tentatively qualified after initial screening become a New Working Applicant (NWA) and Marine Corps guidance specifies the "Questionable Conduct, or Aberrant Behavior Screening Form." will be completed on all NWAs. **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	[redacted]
	5	23	3	☒	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: On page 23, the report incorrectly states that the Marine Corps does not specify when enlisted applicants are required to complete the Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities statement of understanding. Marine Corps guidance requires all recruiters and applicants to complete the Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities statement of understanding before becoming a New Working Applicant (NWA). After verifying completion	[redacted]

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **REPLACES SD FORM 818, WHICH IS OBSOLETE**
SELECT A CLASSIFICATION 4

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (cont'd)

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION

DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCUR?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
					of the statement of understanding form, the SNCOIC will communicate with the Operations Officer to have the status of the applicant deliberately changed from prospective applicant to NWA in the Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System. This action is completed before the Operations Officer schedules an appointment at the Military Entrance Processing Station. **Coordinator Recommended Change**: Marine Corps guidance specifies the "Participation in Criminal Gangs and Extremist Organizations and Activities" statement of understanding form will be completed on all NWAs. **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	
	6	33	2	☐	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: The fourth column in table 10 is labled "not screened using fingerprint check results". This title leads the reader to assume the Marine Corps and Air Force applicants were not screened; however, on pages 35 and 36 the DODIG reports the Marine Corps and Air Force screened the applicants using fingerprint check results but did not retain the results as part of the application package. **Coordinator Recommended Change**: Change the title of the fourth column in table 10 to "Finger Print Check Results Not Retained in Application Package" **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	[redacted]

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **REPLACES SD FORM 818, WHICH IS OBSOLETE**
SELECT A CLASSIFICATION 5

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (cont'd)

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION

DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCUR?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
	7	34	1	☐	**Coordinator Comment and Justification**: The fourth column in table 11 is labled "without evidence of background investigation initiation". This title leads the reader to assume the Marine Corps did not submit the background investigation; however, on page 35 the DODIG reports the Marine Corps did submit the background investigation to Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency but did not retain the results as part of the application package. **Coordinator Recommended Change**: Change the title of the fourth column in table 11 to "Evidence of background investigation initiation not retained" **Originator Response**: Choose an item. **Originator Reasoning**:	[redacted]

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **REPLACES SD FORM 818, WHICH IS OBSOLETE**
SELECT A CLASSIFICATION 6

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (cont'd)

SELECT A CLASSIFICATION

DoD ISSUANCE COORDINATION RESPONSE: DODIG Draft Report, Project No. D2022-D000RG-0052.000, "Audit of the Military Service Recruiting Organizations' Efforts to Screen Applicants for Extremist and Criminal Gang Behavior"

HOW TO FILL OUT THE DD 818 MATRIX

GENERAL GUIDANCE:

- **To sort table** by page/paragraph number, hover your mouse over the top of the first cell in the "page" column until a downward arrow appears; click and drag to the right to select both page and para columns. Under Paragraph on the Home ribbon, select A-Z button, set to sort by Column 3 and then Column 4, and select "OK." **To add new rows,** copy and paste a blank row to keep consistent formatting. **To add automatic numbering to column 2**, select entire column and click on the Numbering button under Paragraph on the Home ribbon.

COORDINATING OSD AND DOD COMPONENTS:

- Do not use the DD Form 818-1.
- Fill in the memo indicating your Component's position on the issuance. Fill in the authorized coordinator's name, position, and Component. The authorized coordinator (digitally) signs the response after the comment matrix has been completed. **Making additional changes after filling in a digital signature invalidates and removes the signature.**
- Use the comment matrix to provide comments to the OSD Component that created the issuance. Complete the header and footer and Columns 1 -7:

COLUMN 1	Enter the classification of the comment. If any material is **classified**, follow DoDM 5200.01 guidance for marking the document. If all comments are unclassified, mark the header and footer and ignore the column.
COLUMN 2	Order comments by the pages/paragraphs that they apply to in Columns 3 and 4.
COLUMNS 3&4	Cite the page on which the paragraph appears; cite the paragraph number as it appears in the text, e.g. 2.1.a..
COLUMNS 5	Only mark this box if you non-concur with the issuance and the comment in the applicable row is part of the basis for that non-concur. A nonconcur is typically used only when an issuance contains: (a) a violation of the law or contradiction of Executive Branch policy or of existing policy in a DoDD, DoDI, or other instrument approved by the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense; or (b) an unnecessary risk to safety, life, limb, or DoD materiel; waste or abuse of DoD appropriations; or unreasonable burden on a DoD Component's resources.
COLUMN 6	Place only one comment per row. Enter your comment, justification, and recommended changes in the first two areas provided. If any material is **classified** or **controlled unclassified information**, follow DoDM 5200.01 or DoDI 5200.48 guidance for marking the document.
COLUMN 7	As stated.

- **Review** the comments, **resolve** any conflicting views, and **confirm** that the completed matrix accurately represents your Component's position. Upload the form to the DoD Directives Program Portal in **Microsoft Word format (.docx)**, with the signed memo representing your Component's position.

DD FORM 818, AUG 2016 **REPLACES SD FORM 818, WHICH IS OBSOLETE**
SELECT A CLASSIFICATION 7

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFRISS-TF Air Force Recruiting Information Support System–Total Force

FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation


INSPECTOR GENERAL
INTEGRITY
EFFICIENCY
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Whistleblower Protection
U.S. Department of Defense

Whistleblower Protection safeguards DoD employees against retaliation for protected disclosures that expose possible fraud, waste, and abuse in Government programs. For more information, please visit the Whistleblower webpage at http://www.dodig.mil/Components/Administrative-Investigations/Whistleblower-Reprisal-Investigations/Whistleblower-Reprisal/ or contact the Whistleblower Protection Coordinator at Whistleblowerprotectioncoordinator@dodig.mil

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