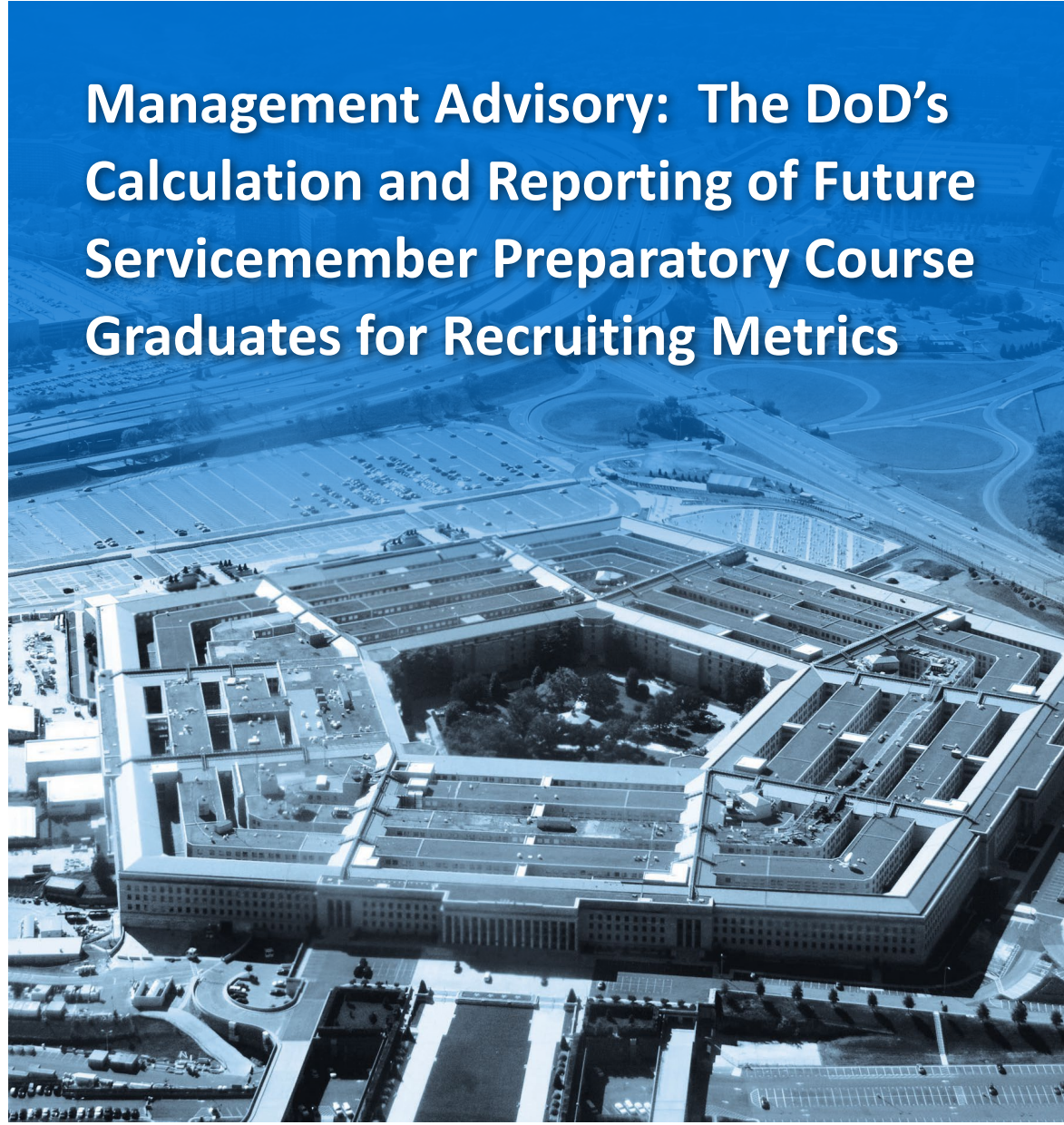




# INSPECTOR GENERAL

*U.S. Department of Defense*

DECEMBER 11, 2025



## Management Advisory: The DoD's Calculation and Reporting of Future Servicemember Preparatory Course Graduates for Recruiting Metrics

INDEPENDENCE ★ INTEGRITY ★ EXCELLENCE ★ TRANSPARENCY







**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**  
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500

December 11, 2025

**MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS**

**SUBJECT: Management Advisory: The DoD's Calculation and Reporting of Future  
Servicemember Preparatory Course Graduates for Recruiting Metrics  
(Report No. DODIG-2026-031)**

This final management advisory identifies concerns found during our Review of the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course, and observed again during our Evaluation of the Navy's Future Sailor Preparatory Course (FSPC).<sup>1</sup> We conducted these projects from April 2024 through August 2025 in accordance with applicable Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency quality standards.<sup>2</sup> We previously provided copies of the draft management advisory and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft management advisory when preparing the final advisory. These comments are included in the advisory.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD[M&RA]) disagreed with the recommendation presented in this advisory; therefore, we consider the recommendation unresolved. We will track this recommendation until management agrees to take action that we determine to be sufficient to meet the intent of the recommendation, and management submits adequate documentation showing that all agreed-on actions are completed. DoD Instruction 7650.03 requires that recommendations be resolved promptly. Therefore, please provide a response concerning specific action in process or alternative corrective actions proposed on the recommendation within 30 days. Send your response to [REDACTED]

Section 520, title 10, United States Code (10 U.S.C. § 520) limits the number of enlistments or inductions of Category IV applicants (applicants with an Armed Forces Qualification Test [AFQT] score between the 10th and 30th percentile) to 4 percent of the total number of each Military Service's active-duty accessions.<sup>3</sup> According to 10 U.S.C. § 520, the Military Services can exceed the 4 percent limit with approval from the Secretary of Defense. The Secretary of Defense must notify the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives within 30 days of the authorization. Moreover, if a Military Service's Category IV enlistments exceed 10 percent of its active-duty accessions, 10 U.S.C. § 520 requires that the Military Service establish a statutorily mandated future

<sup>1</sup> DoD Office of Inspector General, "Management Advisory: Review of the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course" (Report No. DODIG-2025-092), May 1, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> We conducted the Review of the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Federal Offices of Inspector General," published in August 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. We conducted the Evaluation of the Navy's Future Sailor Preparatory Course in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation," published in December 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

<sup>3</sup> Section 520, title 10, United States Code, "Limitation on enlistment and induction of persons whose score on the Armed Forces Qualification Test is below a prescribed level," January 6, 2025. The AFQT is the primary test the Military Services use to determine general eligibility for serving in the military and to report recruit quality.

Servicemember preparatory course for all Category IV recruits.<sup>4</sup> A statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course requires the Secretary of the applicable Military Service to submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the structure and results of the course. Specifically, the report must include the following elements.

- The number of individuals who attend the preparatory course.
- The number of individuals who graduated from the preparatory course.
- The average improvement in AFQT score for individuals who graduate from the preparatory course.
- The determination of the Secretary on the effectiveness of the preparatory course.
- Recommendation of the Secretary on how to improve the preparatory course, and whether to expand the preparatory course.
- Any other matter the Secretary determines to be relevant.

The Navy established a non-statutorily required version of the FSPC to address recruiting challenges and increase the number of potential applicants for naval service. Specifically, in April 2023, the Navy launched the FSPC-Fitness Skills Development program. The program is a 3-week course to provide recruits an opportunity to overcome physical fitness barriers to service, by providing a structured environment focused on low-impact workouts and classes on nutrition and sleep hygiene. Additionally, in January 2024, the Navy launched the FSPC-Academic Skills Development program to provide recruits an opportunity to increase their AFQT scores, thus increasing the number of jobs for which recruits can qualify. The FSPC-Academic Skills Development program is a 3-week course available to recruits who score below the 31st percentile on their AFQT. After 3 weeks, recruits take the Armed Forces Classification Test to obtain their updated AFQT score.<sup>5</sup> As these two programs are not statutorily required, the Naval Service Training Command is responsible for providing oversight of the Navy's FSPC.

Although the Navy's FSPC effectively prepared participants to meet or exceed the DoD's minimum enlistment standards, the Navy did not accurately calculate the number of Category IV enlistments in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 520. Specifically, according to Navy Recruiting Command officials, when they calculate the number of Category IV enlistments for the fiscal year, they deduct the number of FSPC-Academic Skills Development program recruits who improve from Category IV into other AFQT categories from the total number of Category IV enlistments. We reviewed data provided by Navy Recruiting Command officials, and found that as of March 31, 2025, the Navy exceeded the 4 percent limit when calculating enlistments based on recruits' pre-FSPC AFQT category. Specifically, as of March 31, 2025, 2,763 (11.3 percent) of the 24,388 enlistments for FY 2025 were Category IV. However, according to officials in the Office of the ASD(M&RA), the Navy neither requested nor

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<sup>4</sup> The Military Services can operate a non-statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course before exceeding the 10 percent threshold of Category IV enlistments. Non-statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory courses are not subject to all the requirements of 10 U.S.C. § 520, such as the congressional reporting requirement. A statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course includes specific enrollment, graduation, and congressional reporting requirements.

<sup>5</sup> The Armed Forces Classification Test is the in-service assessment used to evaluate enlisted Service members for possible reclassification and retraining opportunities.

received the required approval from the Secretary of Defense to exceed the 4 percent limit of Category IV enlistments in FY 2025.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, this percentage of Category IV enlistments exceeds 10 U.S.C. § 520's 10 percent threshold for establishing a statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course with the associated oversight and reporting requirements.

This occurred because guidance issued by the ASD(M&RA) directed the Military Services to use a recruit's future Servicemember preparatory course AFQT score when calculating the number of Category IV enlistments for a fiscal year. Specifically, on May 31, 2024, and February 28, 2025, the ASD(M&RA) issued memorandums directing the Military Services to deduct the number of recruits who improved their AFQT score above Category IV while in a statutorily mandated or non-statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course from the aggregate number of Category IV enlistments for the fiscal year.<sup>7</sup> This calculation slowed the rate at which the Military Services reached the 10 U.S.C. § 520 4 percent and 10 percent thresholds, and the associated congressional notification and reporting requirements. For example, by following the ASD(M&RA) guidance, the Navy incorrectly calculated its FY 2025 Category IV enlistments at 7.2 percent, as of March 31, 2025, instead of 11.3 percent if calculated in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 520. Additionally, according to a recruiting and retention report for FY 2025 provided by the Office of the ASD(M&RA), as of June 30, 2025, both the Army and Navy exceeded the 4 percent threshold of Category IV enlistments. However, neither Service requested Secretary of Defense approval because, according to the report, the Services were waiting for recruits to graduate from future Servicemember preparatory courses before determining their final numbers. While 10 U.S.C. § 520 allows a Military Service operating a statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course (a course established when a Service exceeds 10 percent Category IV enlistments) to recalculate enlistments based on the AFQT scores that recruits obtain while in the program, it does not permit that same recalculation process for recruits attending a non-statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course.

If the Navy does not accurately calculate the number of Category IV enlistments, it is at risk of circumventing the statutory requirements to obtain Secretary of Defense approval to exceed the 4 percent limit on Category IV enlistments, notify the appropriate congressional committees, and establish a statutory program. Moreover, exceeding enlistments of Category IV recruits, who, according to DoD Instruction 1145.01, tend to exhibit below-average trainability and on-the-job performance, without the awareness and approval of the Department's leadership, could create unanticipated quality gaps in the fleet, degrading the Navy's overall readiness and lethality.<sup>8</sup>

We identified a similar issue during the Review of the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course. Specifically, we found that the Army also relied on ASD(M&RA) guidance to use recruits' updated AFQT scores to recalculate the distribution of their original enlistments. Specifically, the Army Active Component exceeded Category IV enlistments by over 10 percent

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<sup>6</sup> The Navy received approval to exceed the 4 percent limitation on Category IV enlistments for FY 2024.

<sup>7</sup> ASD(M&RA) memorandums, "Policies Related to the Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower," May 31, 2024, and "Revisions to Execution of the Statutory Future Servicemember Preparatory Course," February 28, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> DoD Instruction 1145.01, "Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower," December 12, 2013 (Incorporating Change 3, September 19, 2024).

due to incorrectly recalculating recruits based on the AFQT scores the recruits obtained while in the preparatory course. Since we identified similar procedures used by both the Army and Navy, we believe this is a systemic issue that warrants the ASD(M&RA)'s attention.

## **Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response**

### ***Recommendation 1***

**We recommend that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs issue clarifying guidance that permits the Military Services to recalculate the distribution of original Category IV enlistments only if operating a statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course consistent with the requirements of section 520, title 10, United States Code.**

### ***Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Comments***

The official Performing the Duties of the ASD(M&RA) disagreed with the recommendation. The ASD(M&RA) stated that the May 2024 and February 2025 memorandums were consistent with 10 U.S.C. § 520 and directly advance the Department's goal of building a capable and lethal force. The ASD(M&RA) also stated that this advisory confuses the term "original enlistment" as used in 10 U.S.C. § 520 with a recruit's original or first AFQT score. The official added that 10 U.S.C. § 520 does not state or imply that the calculation of Category IV enlistments be based on the first test the recruit takes, nor does it prohibit using the updated AFQT score when calculating the percentages of allowed original enlistments during a fiscal year. Additionally, the ASD(M&RA) stated that neither 10 U.S.C. § 520 nor any other provision of law prohibits a recruit from taking the Armed Forces Classification Test more than once during the accession process. The official stated that the updated AFQT scores allow recruits to pursue a broader range of occupations, benefiting the recruits and the Military Services. According to the official, requiring FSPC graduates who increase their AFQT scores to Category IV or higher to be included in the total number of Category IV enlistments would undermine the mission and objectives of the FSPC.

### ***Our Response***

Comments from the official Performing the Duties of the ASD(M&RA) did not address the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is unresolved. While we agree with the utility of future Servicemember preparatory courses in building a capable and lethal force, calculating the number of Category IV enlistments for the fiscal year must align with the statutory requirements of 10 U.S.C. § 520. Furthermore, title 32 Code of Federal Regulations part 66, which incorporates applicable enlistment requirements including 10 U.S.C. § 520, states that "overall aptitude requirements for enlistment and induction are based on applicant scores on the AFQT derived from the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery," not the Armed Forces Classification Test.<sup>9</sup> The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is the sole aptitude test authorized for determining enlistment and induction eligibility across the Military Services.

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<sup>9</sup> Title 32, Code of Federal Regulations Part 66, "Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction," establishes basic entrance qualification standards for enlistment into the Military Services, including aptitude standards.

While we agree that during the enlistment process an applicant can take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test multiple times, the score used when calculating the number of Category IV enlistments must be a score obtained during the application process.<sup>10</sup> Individuals attending future Servicemember preparatory courses have already signed their enlistment contracts, transitioning them from civilians to members of the armed forces, therefore ending the application process. Accordingly, the DoD must use the AFQT score obtained at the time of original enlistment when calculating the number of Category IV enlistments for the fiscal year and accomplishing the associated congressional reporting. Therefore, we request that the official performing the duties of the ASD(M&RA) provide comments to the final advisory within 30 days describing what actions they plan to take to issue guidance requiring the Military Services to recalculate the distribution of original Category IV enlistments only if operating a statutorily mandated future Servicemember preparatory course.

If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED]

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the evaluation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bryan T. Clark  
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations  
Programs, Combatant Commands, and Operations

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<sup>10</sup> The DoD establishes minimum wait times between Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery attempts.

# Management Comments

## Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs



MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS

### OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE 1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

#### MEMORANDUM FOR INSPECTOR GENERAL

SUBJECT: Response to the Office of Inspector General Management Advisory: Evaluation of the Navy's Future Sailor Preparatory Course

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD(M&RA)), non-concurs with the conclusions and recommendation in the Office of Inspector General (OIG) report, "Management Advisory: Evaluation of the Navy's Future Sailor Preparatory Course," September 9, 2025. Most importantly, this office non-concurs with the report's interpretation of the requirements in 10 U.S.C. § 520 (Sec. 520), as applied to Department policy. My point of contact for this action is [REDACTED].

#### Specific Comments:

The Department policy provided in the ASD(M&RA) memorandums, "Policies Related to the Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower," May 31, 2024, and "Revisions to Execution of the Statutory Future Servicemember Preparatory Course," February 28, 2025, is consistent with Sec. 520 and furthers the purpose and intent of a "Future Soldier/Sailor Preparatory Course (FSPC)." It directly advances the important goal of building a capable and lethal force in a transparent and effective manner. Regrettably, the OIG in its report has conflated the term "original enlistment" as is used in Sec. 520 with a recruit's original or first score on the Armed Forces Qualification Test; these are not the same. Sec. 520 places limits on the number of persons who may be "originally enlisted", with an Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT)<sup>1</sup> score in CAT IV (AFQT score 10 - 30), to serve on active duty during a fiscal year; it limits this to 4 percent of the total number of persons originally enlisted during that fiscal year, with the authority for waiver by the Secretary of Defense. However, neither Sec. 520, or any other provision of law, prohibits a recruit from taking the test more than once during or near the conclusion the accession process, as is frequently done at the end of the FSPC. Moreover, Sec. 520 does not state or imply that its calculations of AFQT scores must only be based on the first test the recruit takes. There is no prohibition to taking the test more than once "during such fiscal year," and the manner in which the Department has interpreted the term "originally enlisted" is reasonable and clearly aligned with the Department's mission. The OIG's preferred interpretation of the statute is not singular nor controlling on the Department.

Improving a recruit's academic skills is a primary reason for creating the FSPC. Improved academic skills, and the resulting AFQT scores, enable such recruits to pursue a broader range of occupations which benefits them and the Military Services. Sec. 520 does not

<sup>1</sup> AFQT is based on four subtests of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).



## Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (cont'd)

prohibit using the improved score when calculating the percentages of allowed “original enlistments” during a fiscal year, and Department policy reflects this conclusion.

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for developing personnel-related policies to advance the objectives of the Department, in a manner consistent with the law. The policies excluding FSPC graduates who increased their AFQT scores to CAT IIIB or above (AFQT score  $\geq 31$ ) from the CAT IV population during the fiscal year are consistent with the law, and OUSW(P&R) has been transparent and forthcoming with Congress about this policy and the benefits derived from it.

Requiring FSPC graduates who increase their scores to CAT IIIB or above to be included in the CAT IV population would undermine the FSPC program mission and objectives. Demonstrated improvement in skills and capabilities of FSPC graduates resulting from the training is evidence that the programs are successful.

Furthermore, the recommendation requiring different accounting for non-statutory and statutory versions of the FSPC program would be cumbersome and inefficient, detracting from the Department’s mission to build lethality in the armed forces.

My point of contact is [REDACTED]

FITZHUGH.WILLIA  
M.GRAYSON. [REDACTED]

William G. Fitzhugh  
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary  
of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs



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4800 Mark Center Drive  
Alexandria, Virginia 22350-1500  
[www.dodig.mil](http://www.dodig.mil)  
DoD Hotline 1.800.424.9098

