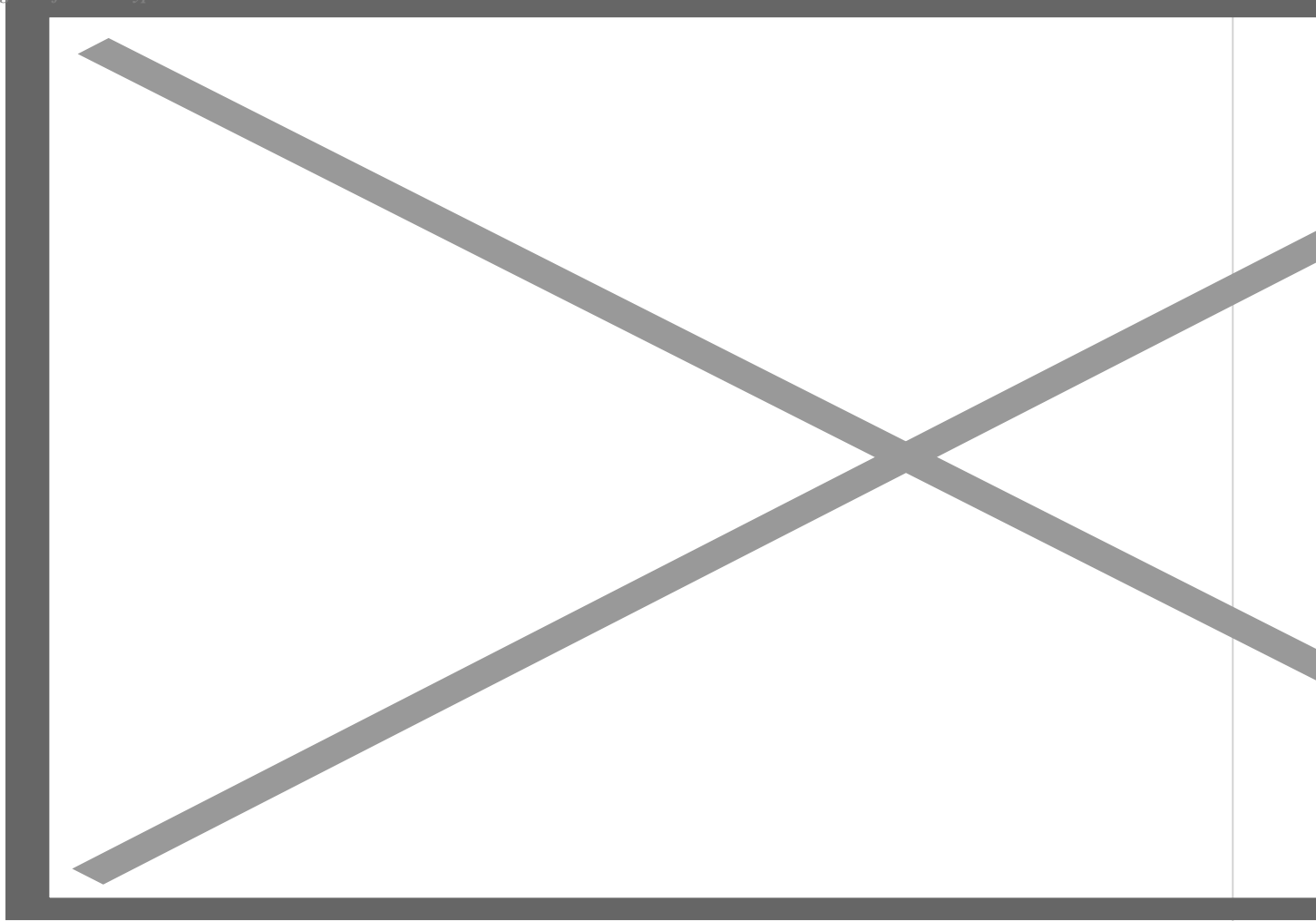


Recruiting crisis forces U.S. Army to drop educational and tattoo rules

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Washington, June 26 (RHC)-- The U.S. Army has been forced to drop its minimum educational requirement and relax its tattoo rules in face of a surging recruiting crisis affecting the country's entire military services.

The Army tossed its mandate for potential recruits to have a high school diploma or GED certificate to enlist in the service, in one of the most drastic moves yet to ease the growing recruitment dilemma crisis impacting the US Defense Department, the military.com news outlet reported Friday.

According to the report, the service announced on Thursday that individuals may enlist without those previously required education certifications if they ship to basic training this fiscal year, which ends on October 1st.

Recruits must also be at least 18 years old and otherwise qualify for a job in the active-duty Army. They must also score at least a 50 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), an SAT-style quiz intended to measure a potential recruit's academic ability.

A 50 on the test, however, "is a relatively low score, with 31 being the minimum to qualify for service," the report emphasized, noting that combat arms jobs such as infantrymen and cavalry scouts need only minimal scores to serve, while admin work such as a human resources specialist or public affairs require scores of 100 or higher.

The change follows another shift in policy earlier in the week when the Army relaxed its tattoo rules, allowing potential recruits to enlist with tattoos on their hands and neck, which previously needed waivers.

The service significantly relaxed its tattoo policy this past week, becoming the military branch with some of the most relaxed rules for ink, as it scrambles to deal with record low enlistment.

"Social norms, people are getting more tattoos," said Sgt. Maj. Ashleigh Sykes, who oversees Army uniform policies, in a Thursday press briefing. "It doesn't stop readiness if someone has a tattoo on the back of their neck."

The Army and its sister services have seriously struggled this year, offering increasingly generous benefits and policy tweaks in their bids to improve recruiting numbers. The Army has only met 40 percent of its recruiting goals this year, with the challenge to fill the ranks appearing so grim that the Defense Department reduced its planned total force size since prior recruiting goals were out of reach.

Such challenges also come amid a low unemployment rate and a competitive civilian job market, with employers offering better wages and benefits even for entry-level jobs.

The policy change was largely triggered by the U.S. military's difficulty in recruiting new troops into the force this year, as it faces a more competitive civilian job market and more intensive medical screenings for new recruits, and typically rejects many over minor criminal infractions, including the use of marijuana.

This is while less than one-quarter of young Americans are even qualified to join military services, often due to obesity.

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