

★ ARMED FORCES ★
Special Edition

Men and Women Joining the Military

Armed Services meet enlistment goals

New figures show that the military services have just completed a banner year for recruiting and retention.

The services met their overall recruiting numbers and exceeded qualitative goals, Clifford Stanley, the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness said last week.

The Air Force recruited 28,493 Airmen, topping a goal of 28,360. The Army had the highest recruit-

ally missed its recruiting goal to stay within end-strength limits.

The services also set quality records with 100 percent of the recruits in the Army and Marine Corps having a high school diploma. In the Air Force, the percentage with at least a high school diploma was 99 percent and in the Navy, 98 percent.

While the high unemployment rate has helped spur recruiting, it was not the biggest reason young

those who are wearing a uniform today, and we're still proud to have that in our active and our reserve components, and our Guard."

Mr. Stanley said the propensity of Americans to enlist is higher than

it has been in the past.

Still, he said, there are difficulties.

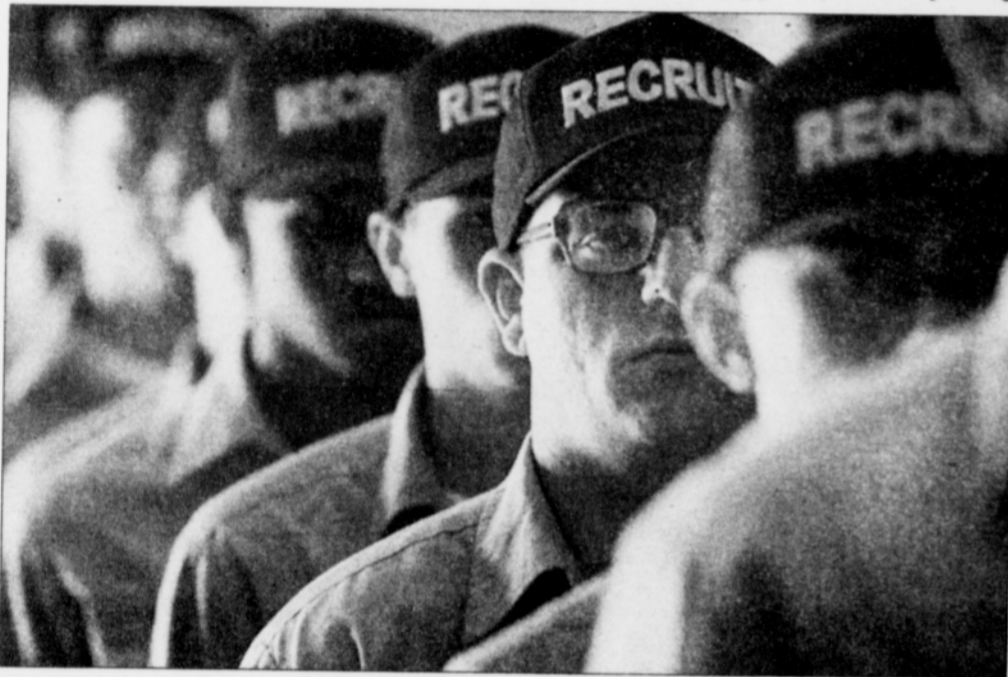
Only three of every 10 Americans in the prime recruiting group of 17 to 24 years of age are even qualified to enlist, he added.

Many candidates, he said, are

disqualified for medical, educational or conduct reasons.

Also, he added, the military and private industries are in competition for these prime recruits.

"Recruiting is always going to be a challenge," Mr. Stanley said. "It's still a challenge."



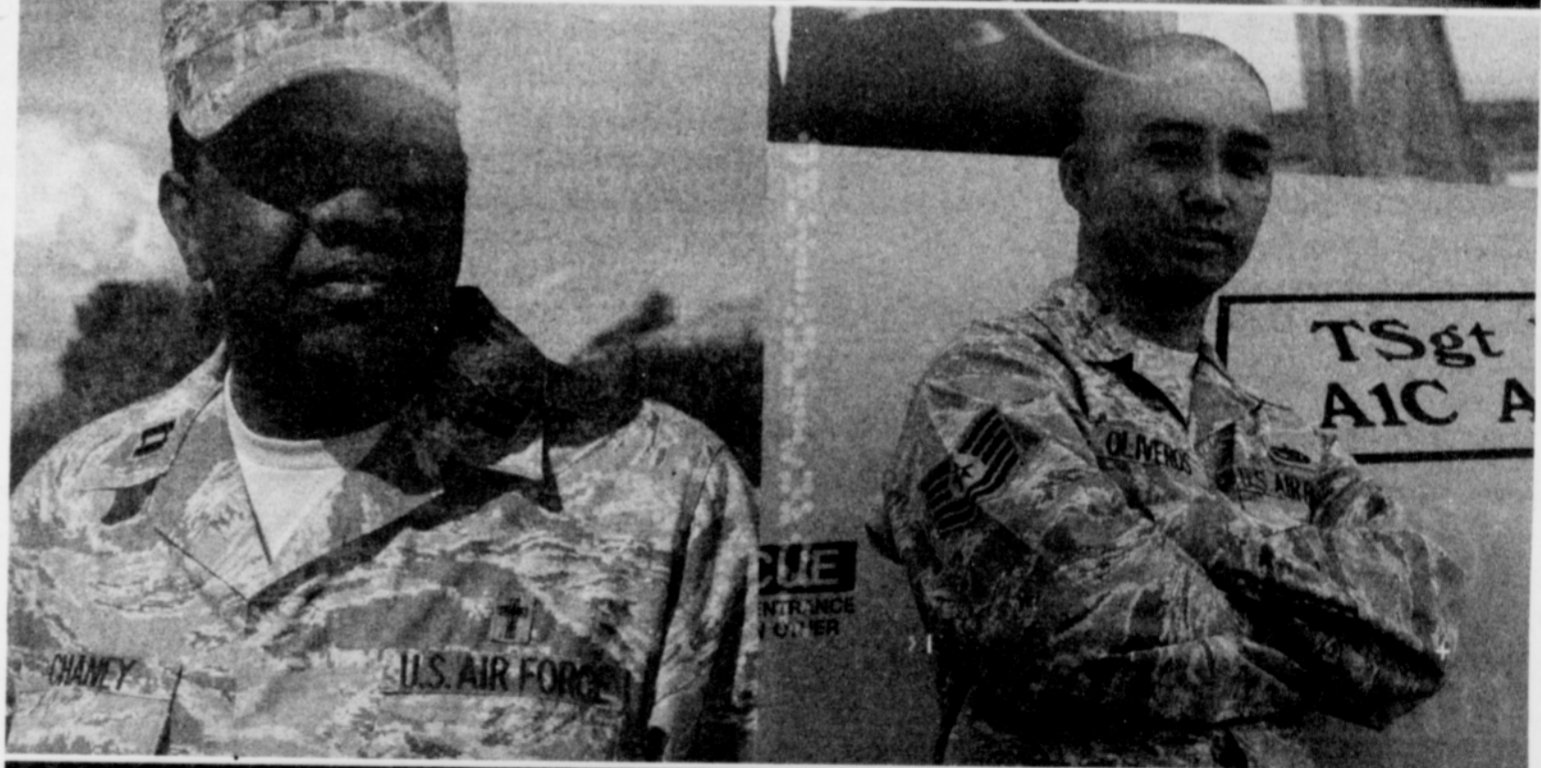
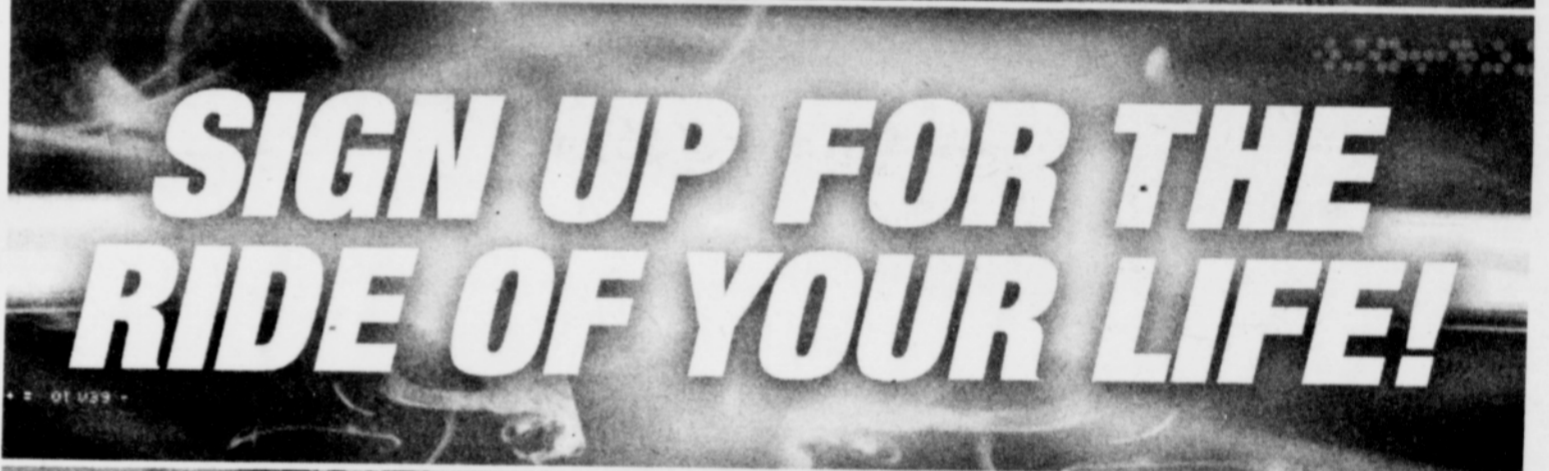
U.S. Navy recruits stand at attention during training at The Great Lakes Recruit Training Command in North Chicago, Ill.

ing goal with 74,500 new Soldiers, and it recruited 74,577. The Navy had a goal of 34,180 Sailors and recruited 34,140. The Marine Corps recruited 28,041 young men and women on a goal of 28,000.

All of the reserve components made their fiscal-year goals, with the exception of the Army National Guard. The Army Guard intention-

ally missed its recruiting goal to stay within end-strength limits.

"As we look at where we are right now in terms of the challenges facing us, it's more to it than the economy," he said. "To a person -- serving their nation, doing it with honor, being patriots -- seems to be the recurring theme that comes up every time we look at and talk to



Deployment to Afghanistan

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Shawn M. Richardson, a 1992 graduate of Madison High School, recently began an almost five-month deployment to Afghanistan.

Richardson is assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, a unit whose primary mission in Afghanistan will be providing construction support to improve the living and working quarters for the 30,000 American troops needed in the country.

The battalion historically pro-

vides responsive military construction support to Naval, Marine Corps, and other forces in military operations; constructs base facilities; and conducts defensive operations as required by the circumstances of the deployment situation.

In times of national emergency or disaster, the battalion also conducts disaster control and recovery operations in the United States, including emergency public works functions.

Richardson joined the Navy in April 1996.

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