



### *The U.S. Military Has Met Its Match: The Fat Gen Z'er*

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If I had a nickel for every time in the last year plus that I've read how the military attributes many of its recruiting woes to out-of-shape Gen Z, I'd be able to treat myself to a nice steak dinner. And each time I hear our DoD brain trust lament "woe is us, only X% of America is fit to join," I must shake my retired head. Allow me this minute to pontificate on the "Great Satan" which is our out-of-shape youth:

Red Flag Rule #1: Don't Fight the Scenario!

This was the first thing briefed at every [Red Flag](#), an Air Force combat training exercise: fight the adversary, not the ruleset. In other words, don't waste time and energy fighting the boundaries that are put in place, instead, focus on fighting and defeating the enemy. In the guise of this topic, there are some unavoidable facts that the military should not be fighting:

1. America's youth is not fit.
2. America's youth will likely continue to be less fit.
3. America's military must be manned; this is a no-fail mission.

This is not rocket surgery here.

America is changing. Military leaders – you with all your Professional Military Education and your self-labeled "strategic visionary" LinkedIn by-lines – news flash: you have to change with America, you (and your legions of [non-vol'd recruiters](#)) can't just impose your will on the nation's youth (unlike the already-recruited youth you can and do impose your wills on). In other words, stop fighting the scenario!

This is not uncharted territory here.



## The DoD Times (Redacted)



When I entered the Air Force to be a pilot, no one asked me how well I could fly a plane. When Army soldiers enlist, no one asks how well they can shoot a rifle. Why? Because the military trains their people to do those things. So, if I can go from showing up off the street to flying an F-16, is it too much of a leap to expect our military to be able to train our recruits on how to exercise and have a healthy lifestyle? With that being said, is it really that much of a calamity to have to lower standards for enlisting (insert indignant gasp here)? Despite its shortcomings, the U.S. military's tactical prowess remains the best in the world, and this is because its training is the best in the world. We can teach kids who have never flown to be single-seat 5th-Gen fighter pilots; surely, we can teach them how to do a push-up.

And while we are on lowering standards...

Upon entering the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1995, the eyesight requirements for me to become a pilot were incredibly strict. You basically had to be able to see through walls to be "PQ" (pilot qualified). Fast forward a mere 3 years and a major pilot shortage later and the Academy's Commandant was nearly ordering people to go to pilot training with all sorts of waivers and relaxed standards being tossed out like candy. And despite all those concessions, guess what happened? People went to pilot training and excelled, as they had been all those years before – no jets falling out of the sky, or post-Lasik eyeballs exploding, or any other manifestations from the gloom and doom predictions from the nay-sayers. So, this talk about adjusting standards to ensure a steady supply of recruits is nothing earth-shattering...we just need to do it...again.

"We are suffering from a healthy economy"

I love that line. And it is here we get to the supply and demand discussion as it pertains to the military as a career. In this case, military jobs are what is being supplied. As for the demand, well, it's headed down the toilet. So, let's say you are one of those out-of-shape Gen Z'ers and you're considering what you want to do for a living, at least for the next few years. In your eyes, the military is offering you the 'privilege' of perhaps going to war and being killed and/or maimed and/or traumatized. Further, the military is 'enticing' you to forfeit some of your rights as an American while it tries to, and does, infringe on other rights you *should* have. Whether or not you go to war while in the service, you're statistically more likely to be [raped or assaulted](#) if you are a woman. And if you do enter into the service, over 17 of you will, during or after your career, [kill yourself each day](#). And with all that, what is the military's 'sales pitch' to you: "You need to run faster in order to be considered worthy!" Is it any wonder why so many kids give the military the middle finger!? Succinctly put: the military is not creating any demand for their products (jobs). Far from it, in fact.

If they *wanted* to get in shape for the military, wouldn't they?

But here's the thing – if Gen Z *wanted* to work for you, wouldn't they do what you asked? I know I don't think like an 18-year-old (well, mostly), but if someone told me that I had to run around a track 6 times to get the job I wanted, I'd have my ass at the track...and I don't like running. But kids aren't doing that. Why? Not because standards are too tough or too high, it's because they don't want any part of our once-heralded profession of arms. I chuckled the other day when I read that the Navy put out a pamphlet on how kids who have not yet enlisted can prepare for passing their PT test. Cool product, Seamen. Problem is – it's not that they don't want to *run*, it's that they don't want to *join*. (I do feel sorry, however, for that sap O-4 staffer that missed his kid's recital because he had to stay late to put that pamphlet together...I'm sure some O-8 took the credit, though.)

My friend "Deuce" used to tell me to think of things in extremes to help frame an issue. So, here's an extreme: if the military paid an E-1 \$10,000,000 (that's 10 million dollars) a year, how many fat Gen Z'ers would get into



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shape? Is it unrealistic to think that *many* would? And although that salary is absurd, it serves to convey this point: there is an extrinsic value that everyone places on most everything and entering the military is most definitely included in that calculus. So, in all this discussion about recruiting woes and fitness and whatnot, how many times have we heard a military senior leader go to the Hill and lobby for higher wages for enlistees? (And I'm not talking about [piddly-shit raises](#) that can't even keep pace with inflation, I mean like [actual raises](#).)

Crickets.

I briefly worked for [Air Force General Mark Kelly](#) who would say something to the effect of 'we've relied solely on the patriotism of our military members for far too long.' Poignant, no?

A(nother) 'Hearts and Minds' defeat.

Let's not mince words here – the recruiting crisis is a conflict that our military is waging...and losing. It is the easiest conflict we can and will ever fight for we have all the intel at our fingertips. There is no fog of war, there is no unpredictable adversary...and yet, we are still pretty much getting our asses kicked. But I don't accept, and I hope you don't either, our military's sulk-in-the-corner response: quibbling about fat kids, or the economy, or BRAC (all the while yammering about how *they aren't getting promoted fast enough*). This war doesn't require a [McChrystal-like spaghetti chart](#) to grasp – it's pretty straightforward and here is the solution to it all:

1. Compensate your people well.
2. Treat them and their families well.

You do that, and they will do all the sit-ups and ammo-can-lifts you want them to.

**Send this newsletter to your elected officials if you believe they have a responsibility to make our military a place where America's sons and daughters want to serve.**

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- Find your Senator here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

Feel free to reach out privately at [francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org](mailto:francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org), or in the comments.

### PETITIONS:

1. [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) demanding that our leaders in Congress change the DoD's unjust administrative investigatory system.
2. [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) demanding real anti-harassment reform in the Military and Coast Guard now.
3. [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) urging the Supreme Court of the United States to hear the case of Staff Sergeant Ryan Carter who was paralyzed from the chest down following a routine surgery at Walter Reed.

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