



# America's Defenders

## Celebrating America's Volunteer Soldiers

(NAPSA)—In every generation, the success of America's Army depends on those who answer the call to service. For 228 years, both drafted and volunteer Army soldiers have served the nation with distinction. This year, the U.S. Army marks the 30-year anniversary of the all-volunteer Army (AVA).

Created to replace the military draft, volunteer service has been the bedrock of Army innovation in the post-Vietnam era. Merit-based promotion practices, superior technology and realistic training are key values that represent the AVA commitment to develop the most formidable soldiers in the world.

"We have a non-negotiable contract to fight our nation's wars and win," says Lt. Gen. John LeMoyne, U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. "To do that and to ensure success under the worst conditions and at the worst times, you've got to have a level of professionalism inside your force that you have absolute confidence in. Today we have that."

Soldiers in today's AVA are more highly educated and motivated than ever before—a bright and tech-savvy force that thrives on personal challenges and teamwork. Competition for America's best and brightest young men and women has resulted in greater opportunities for every soldier, rewarding individual performance, modernizing the force and ensuring mission success.



### THEN AND NOW

The Army's size has shrunk nearly 50 percent since the Vietnam era, but opportunities for every soldier in the AVA have grown—reflected in the Army's demographic changes from 1972 to 2002.

The total percentage of active African American, Hispanic and female soldiers has risen from 20.6 to 41.3 percent, while the percentage of officers among this group has jumped from 9.6 to 32.6 percent. Army leadership's commitment to merit-based promotion policies ensures that soldiers of every race, ethnicity and gender will continue to shape the force in years ahead.

"Regardless of whether you're a minority or not, all our soldiers are judged based on merit, the quality of their performance and their potential," says Brig. Gen. Velma Richardson, Deputy Commanding General of U.S. Army NETCOM/9th Army Signal Command. "That has certainly given great opportunity to every soldier we have in the Army today."

In addition to a peerless commitment to equal opportunity, today's Army is a more highly educated force. Currently, 91 percent of recruits come to the Army with high school diplomas compared with 50 percent in 1974. Today's educated Army prides itself on a high level of professionalism, driving modern innovations in training and support of the force.

### TOMORROW'S AVA

As the AVA builds on soldiers' heightened technical and intellectual skills, the Army continues to develop the nation's best and brightest young men and women into tomorrow's leaders. The commitment to readiness, transformation, integration with other service branches and individual training ensures that the AVA is well prepared to defend the country from America's future threats.

"The Army will face challenges both in peace and in war, but we've been here before," says Lt. Gen. Dennis Cavin, Commanding General of U.S. Army Accessions Command. "America can take great pride in our professional volunteer Army. It's made up of sons and daughters that come from every small town to every large city in the nation. Today's volunteer soldiers continue in the proud footsteps of those that served before them, and will ensure the U.S. Army is prepared for tomorrow's challenges."

To learn more about the U.S. Army, visit [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com).