STATEMENT OF

MR. WILLIAM J. CARR

ACTING DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY)

Before The
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

ON

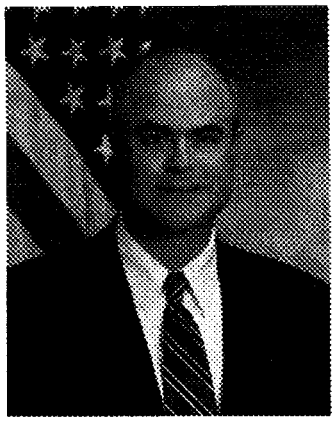
The
Montgomery GI Bill

March 15, 2006

BILL CARR

Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Military Personnel Policy)

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
Personnel and Readiness



Mr. Bill Carr is assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, serving as the Deputy Under Secretary (Military Personnel Policy). He oversees recruiting, retention, compensation, and related human resource management for the 1.4 million active duty military members of the U.S. Armed Services.

A graduate of the United States Military Academy, Mr. Carr holds a Master of Science in Systems Management from the University of Southern California, and has completed postgraduate work (Senior Officials in National Security) at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Mr. Carr's 20-year military career was performed in the field of military personnel management, including service as Chief of Enlisted Management for Army forces in Korea; he also served with the U.S. Army Military Personnel Center as enlisted strength and readiness manager for the Pacific -- Korea, Panama, Hawaii -- and as officer accession manager for Department of the Army. Mr. Carr worked with Armed Forces recruiting as commander of the Defense activity managing recruit-eligibility screening for Hawaii and the Pacific region.

Mr. Carr authored the Secretary of Defense's 1990 report to Congress defining the Department's goals and strategies for accomplishing then-forthcoming military manpower reductions, along with the legislation needed to execute those reductions. He also led the Department's review of aviator management, and authored the report to Congress outlining program deficiencies and legislation -- subsequently enacted -- to address pressing pilot shortages. Mr. Carr also authored the Department's comprehensive review of Armed Forces Quality of Life -- compensation, housing, and support -- culminating in Defense reprogramming ($2.7 billion; six years) to accomplish the reforms outlined in that review.

Accomplishments include award of the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Defense Civilian Career Service Award, and selection as one of the Outstanding Young Men of America. He and his wife, Chris, reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss a cornerstone of our military recruiting efforts, the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). There is little doubt that the MGIB has met or even exceeded the expectations of its sponsors when it was enacted, and has been a major contributor to the success of the All-Volunteer Force.

The original "GI Bill of Rights," created at the end of World War II, gave returning Servicemembers a comprehensive package of benefits to compensate for opportunities lost while in the military, and to ease their transition back into civilian life. The noted economist, Peter Drucker described the GI Bill by saying, "Future historians may consider it the most important event of the 20th century." Perhaps the most far-reaching provision of the GI Bill was the financial assistance it made available for veterans to attend college. The GI Bill offered returning Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines payment of tuition, fees, books, and supplies, along with a living stipend, at the educational institution of the veteran's choice.

Today's Montgomery GI Bill traces its lineage directly to this milestone program, with one important change. While all earlier GI Bill programs were designed to ease the transition to civilian life from a conscripted military force, since 1973 we have defended this nation with a volunteer force. Thus, the MGIB has as one of its purposes, *"to promote and assist the All-Volunteer Force program and the Total Force Concept of the Armed Forces by establishing a new program of educational assistance based upon service on active duty or a combination of service on active duty and in the Selected Reserve to aid in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified personnel for both the active and reserve components of the Armed Forces."*

For today's hearing, I will limit my comments to the Active Duty Components and their MGIB entitlements contained in title 38, U.S. Code. My colleague, Secretary Hall will cover the Reserve Components and the chapter 1606/1607, title 10 U.S. Code, education assistance programs.

THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL

In assessing the current MGIB program it is important to note that education benefits are vital to our recruiting efforts. "Money for college" consistently ranks among the major reason young men and women give for enlisting. Enrollment in the active-duty MGIB program has risen from only 50 percent in its first year, 1985, to nearly 97 percent today. A total of 2.8 million men and women, from an eligible pool of 3.8 million, have chosen to participate in the MGIB since its implementation on July 1, 1985. Such enrollment rates demonstrate the attractiveness of the Montgomery GI Bill.

Today, the Services are facing stiff challenges to recruiting. The number of graduates who are pursuing post-secondary education right out of high school is at an all-time high, and young people are finding that financial assistance to attend college is available from many sources. While few of those sources match the benefits of the MGIB, neither do these sources require young men and women to delay their education for a term of military service or possibly place themselves in harm's way. The MGIB benefit should be sufficient to offset the commitment and sacrifices associated with military service. The current MGIB program continues to serve the Active Components of the military well. It is our belief that there are no significant shortcomings to the program from our perspective.

THE TOTAL FORCE GI BILL

In addition, you asked that we present our views on the Total Force GI Bill concept as proposed by the Secretary on Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Education and the Partnership for Veterans Education. Our staff has been working diligently with staff at the Department of Veterans Affairs as part of a special task force reviewing these initiatives. It would be a bit premature for us to take a position pending the recommendations of that task force. However, it appears clear that these initiatives will have a much more profound impact on the Reserve Components than on the Active Components. There are many issues that must be considered by this task force which will affect both the recruiting and retention of our forces. While I understand the importance and interest in these efforts, I believe it will serve us well to wait to evaluate the task force's findings before taking a firm position.

CONCLUSION

Today, the volunteer military stands ready, willing, and able to defend our great nation, as well as its values and principles. Credit for our success in attracting high-quality people to serve in uniform belongs in large measure to Congress and to your Committee for providing military members with the benefits embodied in the MGIB program. Few areas, if any, are more important to the Secretary of Defense and the Services than recruiting and retention. We recognize our duty to man the All-Volunteer Force with high-quality, motivated, and well-trained men and women. The MGIB education benefit has been a major contributor to recruiting achievements over the past 20 years. It is our hope that any changes to this program, if enacted, would significantly enhance that benefit as a recruiting incentive without a detrimental impact on long-term retention. As we move into the 21st Century, we must continue to build on the remarkable legacy of the visionaries who crafted preceding versions and improvements in the GI Bill. I thank this Committee for its dedicated support to the men and women who currently serve, and those who have served, our great nation.