



Five Soldiers from the 15th MP Brigade took the oath of re-enlistment July 17 in front of the Buffalo Soldier monument at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The ceremony marked the brigade reaching 200 re-enlistments, a benchmark they had not reached in the previous two years. Staff Sgt. Robert Robinson's children, Alex, 4, and Robert, Jr., 7, joined him at the ceremony. Staff Sgt. Robinson said he wanted to re-enlist because he is proud of the Army and he loves leading Soldiers. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester, NCO Journal)

The All-Volunteer Force: Keeping America Safe for 40 Years

Required Competencies for CTC Success

By *STAFF SGT. JASON HELFER*

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Honor, service and sacrifice are just a few reasons why young Americans decide to enlist in the Army and defend the land they call home. Throughout much of America's history a conscription force or "draftees" were needed to supplement the volunteers, especially during a time of heavy conflict such as the Civil War and Vietnam War.

But that changed when President Richard Nixon ended the draft in the United States. As a result, the last

American draftee entered the Army in June 1973. Since then, no American has involuntarily served in the U. S. military.

Although there were some fears in the early 1970s that America would not be able to sustain an all-volunteer military, I believe the skeptics have been proved wrong. In the 40 years since President Nixon signed the bill ending the draft, America's Army has continually filled its ranks with young men and women who heed

the call to duty.

Even as some were still being drafted for the Vietnam War, other Soldiers were volunteering for service in the Army. Former Spc. 4 Roy Milbrodt Sr. is one of those veterans. Milbrodt, who enlisted into the Army out of Cleveland in 1968, served two years in Vietnam, where he earned two Bronze Stars (one for valor) and a Purple Heart.

“I was 18 years old, and I knew I was likely going to be drafted,” Milbrodt said. “I didn’t want to end up in a branch that I didn’t know much about. I liked the idea of serving in the Army, which had treated my father well in World War II.”

Serving in the Army made him a stronger individual, Milbrodt said. “The Army made me grow up in a way that many others didn’t have to. Being 18 years old and being shipped off to a combat zone made me realize the things we take for granted each day are the most important things.”

Milbrodt said one of his greatest contributions to the Army is his son, Staff Sgt. Roy Milbrodt Jr., who is serving as an assistant center commander of Largo, Md., Recruiting Center, a part of the Baltimore Recruiting Battalion. The younger Milbrodt said that he has a great deal of respect for his father and that the new generation of Soldiers has a responsibility to honor the Soldiers of the past.

“Their selfless service — their sacrifices to us and everyone — went unnoticed during [my father’s] time in the Army, and so many looked down on them when they returned home,” Milbrodt Jr. said. “It is up to us, as today’s Soldiers, to honor and pay homage to their sacrifice and dedication.”

More recently, the Army witnessed an influx of Sol-

diers who joined in the months after the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001. For Staff Sgt. Dominick Engel, who was living in New York at the time, the attacks were his call to duty.

“[After the attack happened], I wanted to fight for my country,” said Engel, who joined as an infantryman. Six years later, Engel has served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and has helped neutralize threats that could have potentially taken the lives of American Soldiers.

“I gained new experiences from my deployments, and I have a high level of pride in what I do,” he said.

Every civilian has a different reason for enlisting. Some are looking for a new start in life, some want to serve their country, and some simply want to protect it. For applicant Geoffrey Auza, who will soon join the Army as a 74D chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosives specialist, enlisting with the U.S. Army provides him an opportunity to give back while also gaining U.S. citizenship.

“The Army is helping me get my citizenship, and I want to protect the U.S. from threats,” said Auza, who was born and raised in the Philippines. “Also, I want to use the Army’s college money to finish my bachelor’s degree and pursue nursing. The Army will give me a chance to travel, further my education, and raise my self-esteem.”

Throughout the past 40 years, every soldier has had one thing in common: they all volunteered. And though the tangible benefits are sometimes a driving motive for why a young man or woman volunteers, it is often the intangible benefits — pride, duty and selfless service — that the Soldier cherishes most as a result of his or her service.

Staff. Sgt. Jason Helfer served in the Marines for four years before serving in the Army for five years as a 92F petroleum supply specialist. Helfer currently serves as an Active Guard Reserve recruiter in the Baltimore (Md.) Recruiting Battalion.



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