

Many soldiers not fit for combat for medical, other reasons

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

Updated 11/4/2011 12:21 AM

[Comment](#) 64 [Recommend](#) 167 [Tweet](#) 32 [Email](#) [Print](#) [+](#)

[Reprints & Permissions](#)

Nearly 90,000 soldiers are either unfit for combat with health restrictions or are otherwise unavailable for combat, according to data released to USA TODAY.



By Thomas Brown, Army Times

Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker said an increase in not-medically-ready soldiers hurts the Army's readiness.

While the Army says it can fill combat brigades heading to Afghanistan with healthy soldiers — some rushed in at the last minute as units head overseas — the growing list of ill, injured or wounded is making the job tougher, say military officials.

"The problem of a growing population of not-medically-ready soldiers has begun to erode the readiness of the Army," the service's surgeon general, Lt. Gen. [Eric Schoomaker](#), recently said at a military conference in Washington, D.C.

Army data show record numbers of soldiers either on the sick list, with limited-duty issues, or unfit and waiting months to receive their medical retirement. Plans are in place to reduce the Army by nearly 50,000 soldiers in coming years, further diminishing the pool of healthy GIs, according to a spokesman for the [House Armed Services Committee](#).

"With larger numbers of non-deployable soldiers within a smaller force, the Army will continue to struggle to have sufficient manpower to adequately meet all mission requirements," Claude Chafin says.

There could be even deeper cuts into the healthy ranks of the Army under current plans to reduce the Defense budget by \$465 billion over 10 years, Gen. [Ray Odierno](#), the Army chief of staff, told Congress this week.

Videos you may be interested in



U.S. Army dumps beret for combat uniform



Smartphones for the battlefield

Most Popular

Stories

- [Black Friday shopper surrenders in](#)
- [Pakistan demands U.S. vacate susp](#)
- [Anti-money laundering experts insp](#)
- [Another Ohio Craigslist job scam de](#)
- [Russian TV anchor fired over gestu](#)

Videos

- [Cyber Monday gears up for big year](#)
- [3 arrested U.S. students heading ho](#)
- [Black Friday shoppers](#)

Photos

- [Editorial Cartoons](#)
- [Occupy Wall Street: Signs of protes](#)
- [Protests against Wall Street](#)

Ads by Google

[Georgia Party Venue](#)

Host Your Holiday Party at the Jekyll Island Club Hotel in Georgia
www.JekyllClub.com

[Free Medicare Plan List](#)

Compare All Medicare Plans Now. Enrollment Ends on December 7th!
PlanPrescriber.com/Medicare

[American Express—Savings](#)

A High Yield Savings Account from American Express. Start Saving Now!
americanexpress.com/PersonalSavings

The Army has 565,400 active-duty soldiers augmented by 52,600 mobilized [National](#)

Guard and Reserve soldiers. There are another 500,000 Guard and Reserve soldiers available to call up.

The categories of staffing problems include:

- 47,000 soldiers who are temporarily out of action recovering from wounds, injuries and illnesses, says Lt. Col. Tim Beninato, another spokesman.
- 23,000 soldiers who are on limited duty. Many have health issues, though some deploy for restricted jobs. Others are unavailable for war because they are in transit between bases, caught up in legal cases or in school, though many of these could be sent to war in an emergency.
- 18,178 soldiers are in a disability process for soldiers who are no longer fit for combat that takes more than a year on average to complete.

But that system has become bloated and slow over the years, Army officials says. The Army cannot replace soldiers who are waiting for medical retirements until they are gone.

"It's taking us too long to get through the (disability retirement) system" says Gen. [Peter Chiarelli](#), Army vice chief of staff.

To speed up the disability process, Chiarelli has recently pushed to hire 700 civilian evaluation case managers, assistants, lawyers, doctors and others at a cost of \$65 million next year, says Lt. Col. David Gercken, an Army spokesman.

Assessing disability for rising numbers of mental problems are particularly time consuming, Army officials say.

"An Army at war for 10 years has a voracious demand for behavioral health," says Maj. Gen. [Richard Stone](#), deputy surgeon general.

For more information about [reprints & permissions](#), visit our [FAQ's](#). To report corrections and clarifications, contact Standards Editor [Brent Jones](#). For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to letters@usatoday.com. Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to corrections.usatoday.com.

Posted 11/3/2011 1:15 PM | Updated 11/4/2011 12:21 AM



More from USATODAY

Column: Will America cull people with Down syndrome? *USATODAY.com in News*

Plane with 6 aboard crashes east of Phoenix *USATODAY.com in News*

Tim Tebow responds to Jake Plummer's comments on his faith *USATODAY.com in The Huddle*

Twilight may be hazardous to your health *USATODAY.com in LifeLine Live*

Video game systems among top Black Friday products *USA TODAY in Game Hunters*

More from the web

13 Ugliest Phones of the Mobile Era *TheStreet*

10 Industries Headed for the Dead Pool *The Fiscal Times*

Do you Have Enough Money for Retirement? *Prudential*

HSBC says it may quit London *CFO World*

Mrs. Gaddafi offers 40 million dollars for safekeeping *Naked Security – Sophos*

[?]

We've updated the [Conversation Guidelines](#). Changes include a brief review of the moderation process and an explanation on how to use the "Report Abuse" button. [Read more](#).

What Do You Think?

To leave a comment, you need to sign up.

[Sign up](#)

Most Popular E-mail Newsletter

Sign up to get:

Top viewed stories, photo galleries and community posts of the day

Most popular right now:

[Lady Gaga strips down for Tony Bennett](#)



Sign up for USA TODAY E-mai

[Log in](#)

59 comments Sort: **Oldest to Newest**

	<p>HappyinNevada 1:55 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: 21</p> <p>Bring them all home. Iraq and Afghanistan are not places we need to have our troops. I cannot vote for President Obama again if any troops are in either place when we vote in November 2012.</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>
	<p>SierraGuy 1:57 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: 48</p> <p>We have not even begun to tally the cost of waging two wars for over ten years. I suspect some of these troops will need medical attention for the rest of their lives. We as a population and the politicians in particular need to spend some serious time dealing with the issue of the impact of these two wars. The human toll is horrible the financial toll is outrageous. When will we learn?</p> <p> 1 reply</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>
	<p>caromking 2:18 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: 21</p> <p>Not to mention how many in our population are physically unfit to serve. Fat, slothful youth who couldn't care less about serving our country. Reinstitute the draft and we'll see a lot less wars being waged, for any reason.</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>
	<p>AMERICANBYBIRTH 2:21 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: 33</p> <p>What do you expect - we have been waging war on two fronts for 11 years - the cost in manpower and the cost to our economy has been tremendous - our goals have been met - bring our heroes home - NOW!!!</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>
	<p>hross57 2:23 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: -6</p> <p>Man....Our military is pretty much gone to the pits !</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>
	<p>pj1elwyn 2:33 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: 7</p> <p>I wish that the troops that come home will be used to help rebuild our infrastructure! They will have jobs,helping do something we should have been doing all this time! We all know our country is falling apart from the inside. Roads,bridges and underground utilities is what we need to fix! I look out my windows and see electric lines being strung on dead trees!! Come on lets put them to work!!!</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>
	<p>Doglover3 2:37 PM on November 3, 2011 Score: 17</p> <p>@hross57</p> <p>Need to bring back the draft. You would scream like a baby if your sorry @ss was drafted!</p>	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>

2 replies

Next ▶ ▶|

powered by
Pluck

USA TODAY Digital Services

[Mobile](#) | [E-Newsletters](#) | [RSS](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Podcasts](#) | [Widgets](#) | [e-Edition](#) | [USA TODAY for iPad](#) | [Kindle Edition](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Subs](#)
[Reprints & Permissions](#) | [USA TODAY Topics](#) | [Reporter Index](#) | [Corrections/Clarifications](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Archives](#)



Advertisement

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Travel](#) | [Money](#) | [Sports](#) | [Life](#) | [Tech](#) | [Weather](#) Visit our Partners: [USA WEEKEND](#) | [USA TODAY LIVE](#) | [Sports Weekly](#) | [Education](#) | [S](#)

[Contact us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Pressroom](#) | [Media Lounge](#) | [Jobs](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Reprints/Permissions](#) | [Privacy Notice/Your California Privacy Rights](#) | [Ad Choices](#) | [Terms of Ser](#)

© 2011 USA TODAY, a division of **Gannett Co. Inc.**

A GANNETT COMPANY