U.S. Military Says Many Aspiring Recruits Are Too Fat to Fight

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Every year, thousands of Americans sign up to become soldiers. But a growing number of young black men and women are considered too overweight to meet the minimum physical requirements for enlisting in the U.S. Armed Forces, an issue that top military recruiters are becoming increasingly worried about as the country's obesity epidemic continues to spread, NBC News reports.

According to a recent analysis by the Defense Health Board, today, one in three young Americans of military age is too heavy to serve. Being obese or overweight is currently the number one reason recruits are ineligible to join the U.S. military. What's more, health analysts predict that by 2020, only two out of every 10 recruits will be able to meet required weight-fitness qualifications to serve.

In addition, obesity and overweight aren't issues just among recruits. Among active-duty service members, more than 50 percent of males of all races, and 34 percent of active-duty females in 2011 were classified as "overweight." Currently, among black soldiers, who make up one in five recruits, the issue is even more prominent.

In the Army, those who don't meet weight and fitness requirements are ordered to undergo a strict weight control program that includes nutritional counseling and an intense workout program. If soldiers don't get and stay fit, the Army can and will kick them out of the service.

This issue of being too fat to fight doesn't just apply to the U.S. military. Obesity rates among Armed Forces members and recruits mirror those found in population groups across the country. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), up to 47 percent of non-Hispanic black Americans, 42 percent of Latinos, 32 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 10 percent of Asians are currently considered to be obese.

Looking to lose weight with some military training exercises? Know that not all "boot camp" fitness

programs are created equal. Click here for tips on how to shape up for service, the right way.

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