



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 27, 2026

Army Raises Recruit Age Limit to 42. Ben Shapiro, 42, Says We Can't Quit Iran Now.

The poor physical condition of Americans under age 25 is taking a toll on Army recruitment, and so the military's largest branch is looking for a few good men ... and women ... to fill the ranks.

The Army boosted its recruitment age limit to 42, an age at which some in the military are retiring to begin a second civilian career.

And in yet another acknowledgment that times have changed, the Army is easing its rules on recruits who partake of the Devil's Lettuce. It will overlook a little marijuana smoking.

Meanwhile, podcaster Glenn Greenwald suggests that 42-year-old war booster Ben Shapiro — who says the war must go on — head to a recruiter's office.



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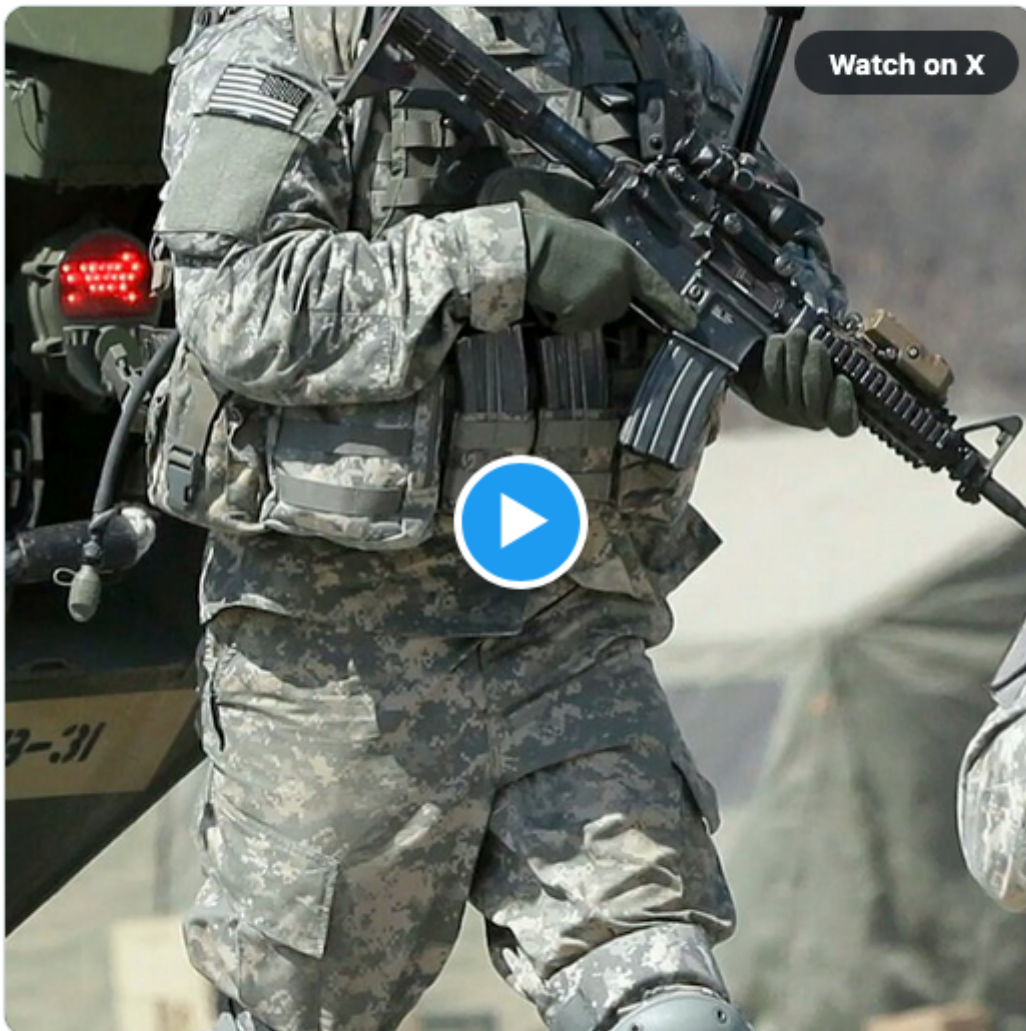
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The U.S. Army is expanding its recruiting pool by raising the maximum enlistment age from 35 to 42, according to new service regulations reviewed by ABC News.

The Pentagon has estimated that only about 23% of young Americans (between the ages of 17 and 24 years old) are eligible [Show more](#)



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New Requirements

The Army upped the enlistment age limit from 35 to 42, [The New York Times reported](#), and relaxed “restrictions for people with marijuana convictions, a move that comes years after a period in which it struggled to meet its recruitment goals and as the country is engaged in a war with Iran.”

The new age limit mirrors that of the Air Force, also 42 as of 2023, and the Navy, 41 as of 2022. And recruits can also have one conviction for possessing Giggly Weed “or drug paraphernalia [without] procuring a waiver from Army officials in order to enlist,” the *Times* reported

“Katherine Kuzminski, the director of studies at the Center for a New American Security and an expert on military recruitment, said the Army most likely increased its age cap to match other military branches and to tap into a larger pool of people with needed skills, including experts in cybersecurity, logistics and transportation,” the [newspaper continued](#):

Ms. Kuzminski was an author of a 2022 report issued by the RAND Corporation that examined the outcomes of older recruits in the Army. The experts found that older recruits were more likely to fail out of basic training, but if they passed, they were promoted more quickly and re-enlisted at higher rates than recruits under 20.

“Mature soldiers who are at the beginning of their careers might be a real value add to those around them in the barracks, and might add a lot of value back to the Army, especially in some of these technical skills,” Ms. Kuzminski said.

Though the Army is relaxing its recruitment restrictions for potential soldiers with marijuana in their past, illegal drugs are still a no-no.

Recruitment Lacking

Yet recruiting the older, wiser, and more talented might not be the only reason for the shift, the *Times* noted. In 2022 the Army missed its recruitment goal of 60,000 by 15,000; it missed the goal in 2023 by the same amount. It reached its goal of 55,000 in 2024 by only “thin margin,” the newspaper continued.

Last year, the Army surpassed its goal of 61,000 by 1,000, and it says it will meet this year’s goal as well.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said President Donald Trump is responsible for the higher number, but that might not be the case, the [Times reported](#):

Army officials ... have linked it to a higher unemployment rate among people aged 16 to 24 and a training program started three years ago that prepares prospective soldiers to meet the Army’s minimum academic and body-fat standards. The U.S. military also spent billions on recruitment efforts after 2022 to address its enlistment crisis.

Kuzminski told the newspaper that the Iran War didn’t inspire the new regulation, but that it was “more likely an effort to address flagging recruitment numbers, noting demographic data that shows an aging U.S. population,” the *Times* explained:

She added that only 23 percent of young Americans meet the standards for military service



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without a waiver, and only around 10 percent of young Americans think the military is a viable career path for them.

“This is much more an answer to the recruiting environment challenges that we saw over the last four years than it is to a particular conflict,” she said. “Tapping into the largest pool of people we can, which includes not only 18-year-olds, but also 42-year-olds who might meet a very specific need in the military, is going to be more important.”

Gen Z Not Fit

A [Pentagon report published](#) in 2022 found that 77 percent of Americans ages 17-24 — the Gen Z cohort — can’t serve in the military because they are overweight, are drug users, or have other “mental and physical health problems.”

“When considering youth disqualified for one reason alone, the most prevalent disqualification rates are overweight (11%), drug and alcohol abuse (8%), and medical/physical health (7%),” the report revealed.

That rate of 77 percent had increased six percent, from 71 percent in 2017.

If Kuzminski is right that 23 percent of young Americans are fit for service, then the rate hasn’t changed since 2022.

Likewise, ABC News reported that just 23 percent of Americans in the 17-24 age range are fit to serve. “The Pentagon has estimated that only about 23% of young Americans (between the ages of 17 and 24 years old) are eligible to serve. “Much of this is due to academic performance on the military’s SAT-style entrance test, obesity and criminal records,” the [network reported](#).

Recruitment Suggestion

Greenwald had a fine suggestion for a new Army recruit: Neoconservative Microphone Warrior Ben Shapiro.

Greenwald reposted video of Shapiro’s telling viewers that the war must go on to keep oil prices low. “There is no way to extricate ourselves from this” without leaving Iran in control of the Strait of Hormuz and paying \$100-\$150 per barrel of oil, Shapiro said.

“The US military yesterday raised its recruitment age to 42,” [Greenwald wrote](#):

By a fantastic coincidence, Ben Shapiro is 42.

What are the chances that Ben Shapiro will go fight with the American soldiers that he and other Israel loyalists in the US want to go invade Iran?

Another possible older recruit is President Trump’s son, [Eric](#), also 42.

Shapiro’s video also invited commentary from conservative Auron MacIntyre.

“We can’t leave the war in Iran because they now control shipping in the strait,” he wrote:

A situation manufactured by our involvement in the war itself

This is why you never give an inch to the neocons, this situation was manufactured on purpose to trap us in a war and it’s working.



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This is why you never give an inch to the neocons, this situation was manufactured on purpose to trap us in a war and it's working <https://t.co/vlAjiCuC3u>

— Auron MacIntyre (@AuronMacintyre) [March 27, 2026](#)



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