

# **Why are Captains Leaving the Army?**

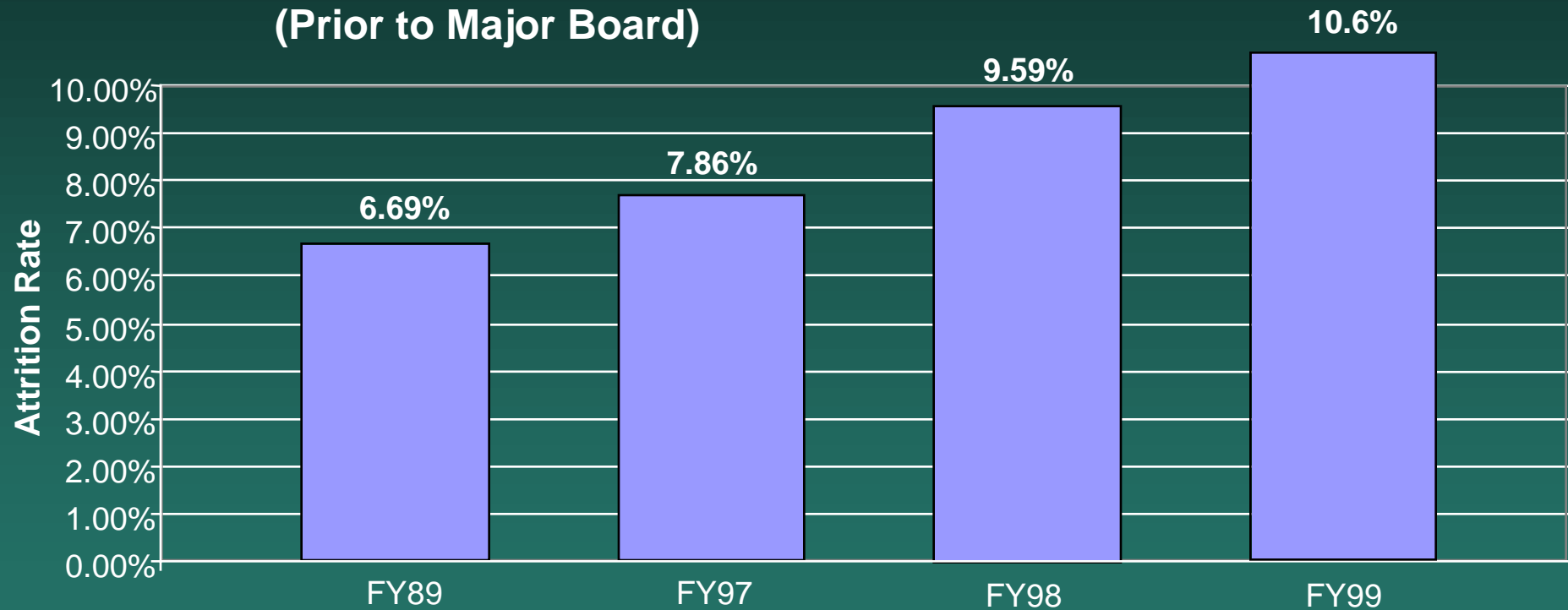
- **Summary Briefing - 3 Slides of Statistical Trends**
- **Detailed Briefing - 19 Slides: Cpt Attrition @ Ft Benning**

# Captain Attrition

Need To Know

Increase of 3%  
represents 440 lost  
captains/year

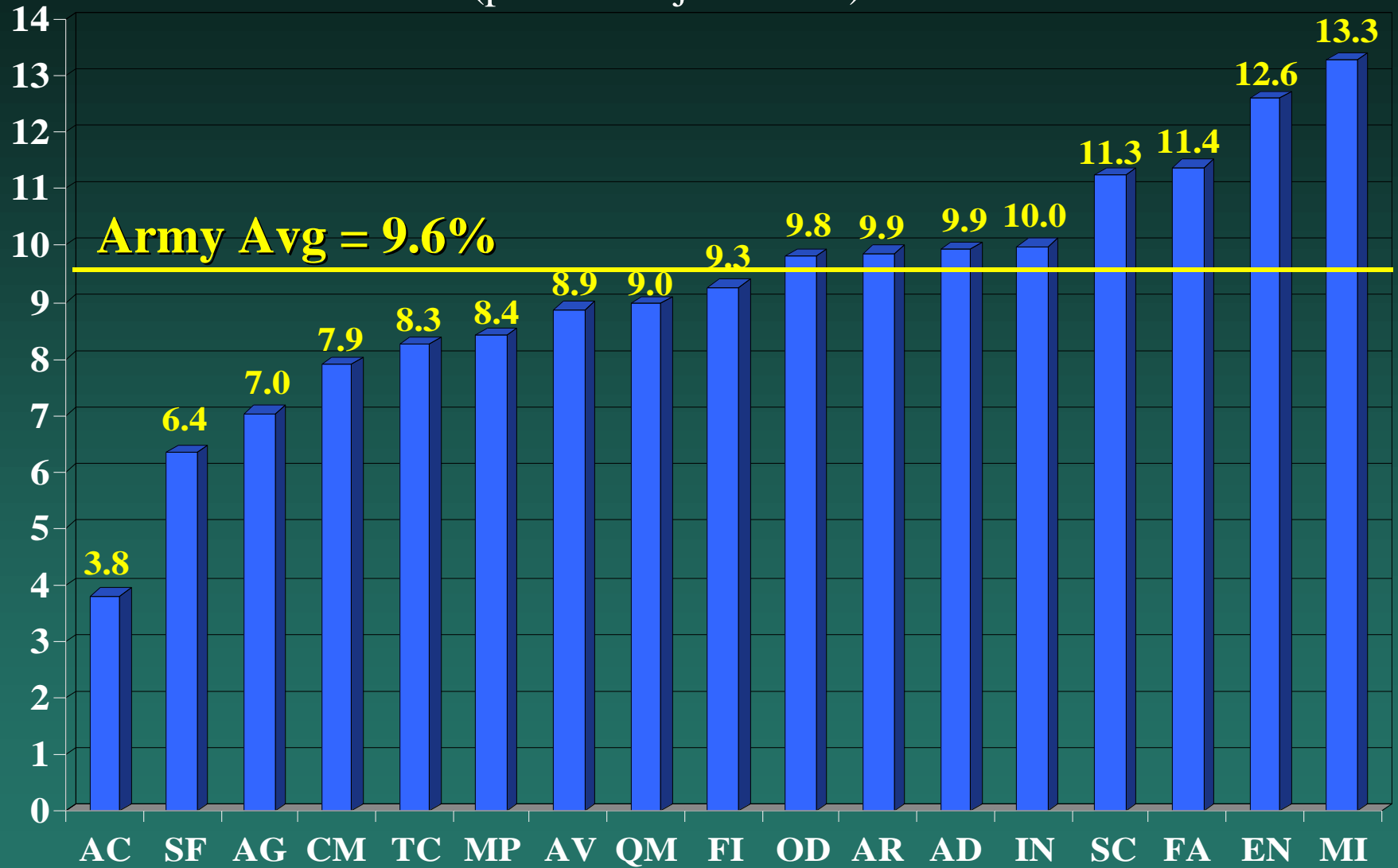
## Increased Attrition at Captain (Prior to Major Board)



# FY98 Captain Attrition

Need To Know

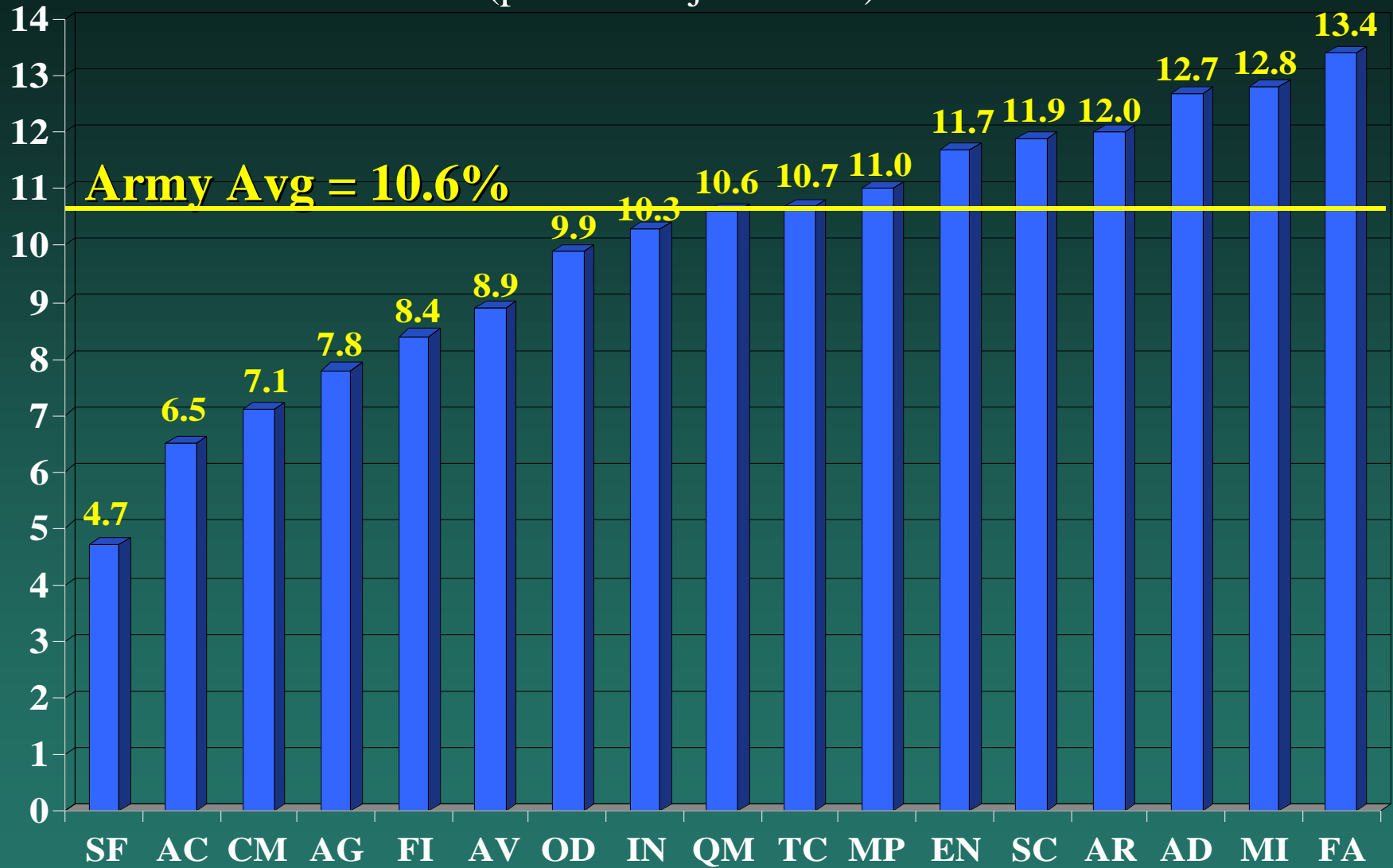
(prior to majors board)



# FY99 Captain Attrition

Need To Know

(prior to majors board)





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# Captain Attrition at Fort Benning

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# Background and Approach

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## Asked by CG to examine captain attrition at Fort Benning

- ✦ Reasons for leaving
- ✦ Problems specific to Fort Benning
- ✦ Quality of officers leaving Army

## Approach

Interviews with Fort Benning stayers (N=16) and leavers (N=17)

- ✦ Major tenant units represented
- ✦ Sample includes 21 Infantry captains
- ✦ Combination of open-ended and structured questions
- ✦ Leavers obtained from USAIS list of separating captains. Units asked to provide names of stayers

Secondary analysis of existing survey data

- ✦ Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers (LROC) and Survey on Officer Careers (SOC)
- ✦ Administered in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1996, and 1998
- ✦ Analysis restricted to Infantry captains (Army wide)



# Captain Background

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## *Leavers (N=17)*

- 5.4 years commissioned service
- 11 Infantry, 6 other
- 1 prior service
- 12 married, 4 with children
- 6 branch qualified
- Commissioning source
  - USMA = 12
  - ROTC = 5
  - OCS = 0

## *Stayers (N=16)*

- 5.6 years commissioned service
- 10 Infantry, 6 other
- 4 prior service
- 12 married, 8 with children
- 5 branch qualified
- Commissioning source
  - USMA = 2
  - ROTC = 11
  - OCS = 3



# Career Intent

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## ◀ Career Intent at time of commissioning:

	<i>Leavers (N=17)</i>	<i>Stayers (N=16)</i>
• Career	29%	50%
• Undecided	47%	38%
• Separate at end of obligation	24%	12%

## ◀ Current career intent among stayers

- 69% plan to remain for 20+ years
- 31% are undecided or plan to separate





# Primary Reasons to Leave or Stay

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## *Primary reasons given for leaving include:*

- **Dissatisfaction with Army job/mission/life (35%)**
- **Perceived incompatibility of Army and family life (35%)**
- **Civilian career opportunities seen as better than Army opportunities (29%)**

◀ **Pay seldom mentioned as reason to leave**

## *Stayers remain because they*

- **Enjoy their Army job/mission/life (100%)**
- ◀ **Stayers successfully resolve family issues**
- ◀ **Liking of Army overrides the negatives**



# Frustrations with Army Job/Life

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- **Dissatisfaction with Army job/life one of top two “push” factors:**

- **OPTEMPO**

- **Excessive micromanagement**

- **Lack of “say” in assignments**

- **Ubiquity of the “Powerpoint Army”**

- **Dissatisfaction with peacekeeping missions**

- **Insufficient support for training**

- **Poor pay/benefits for enlisted soldiers**



# Frustrations with Army Job/Life

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- **Leavers less satisfied than stayers**
  - ↳ **Importance and meaningfulness of work**
  - ↳ **Opportunities for promotion and advancement**
  - ↳ **Overall job satisfaction**
- **No difference between leavers and stayers**
  - ↳ **Pay**
  - ↳ **Working hours**
  - ↳ **Job security**



# LROC/SOC - Contingency Missions

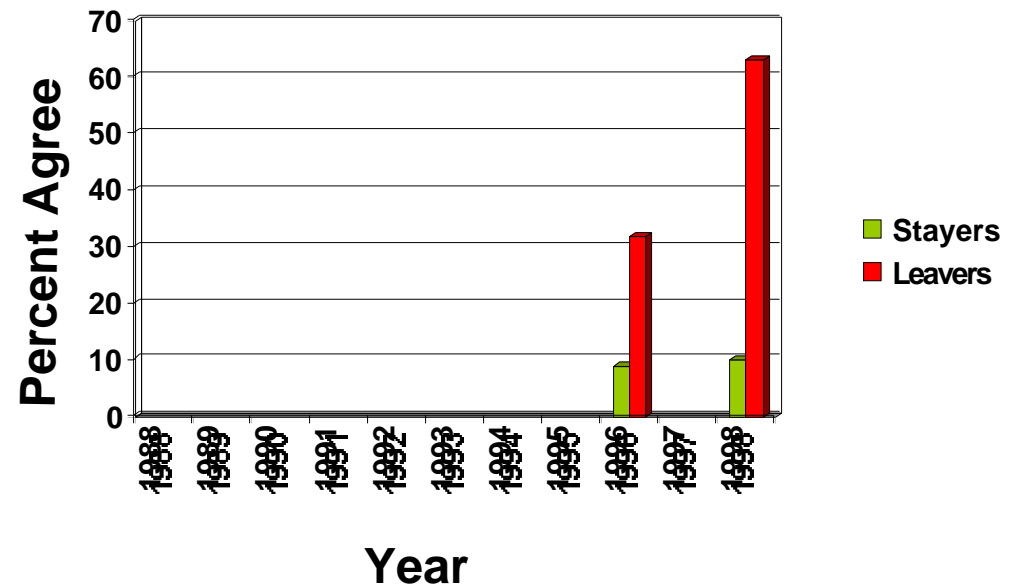
- Leavers say that increase in peacekeeping/contingency missions makes them more likely to leave the Army

- Peacekeeping missions

★ source of career disillusionment for some leavers

✘ Not what they came in Army to do

Contingency Missions/More likely To Leave



“I do not enjoy peacekeeping missions. When I was in Germany, we did zero warfighting training.”



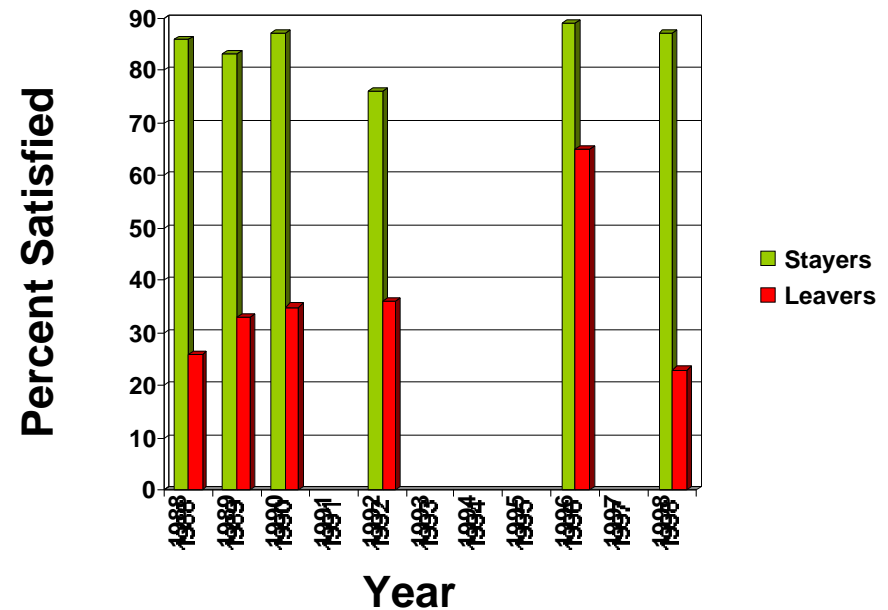
# LROC/SOC - Overall Satisfaction

- Leavers express dissatisfaction about many dimensions of their life as an officer

- Areas of dissatisfaction include

- ✘ Disillusionment with their role as an officer
- ✘ Lack of control in assignments
- ✘ Family disruption
- ✘ Lack of autonomy and limited responsibility

Satisfaction With Life as an Officer



“Jobs I am doing now we had lieutenants do in my previous unit. I am not challenged and overly supervised. It’s just not fun anymore.”



# OPTEMPO

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## **OPTEMPO frequently mentioned as reason to leave**

- **71% of leavers and 50% of stayers dissatisfied with working hours**
- **Long hours affect family, another primary concern of leavers**
- **Frequent deployments and TDYs exacerbate the problem**

**“The hours are tough. Hard to find time for anything else.”**

**“The transitions and moving around have an impact.”**

**“The time lost from my children due to deployments makes getting out more attractive.”**



# LROC/SOC - Disrupted Plans

- Recent *Parameters* article shows junior officers deployed more often than senior officers

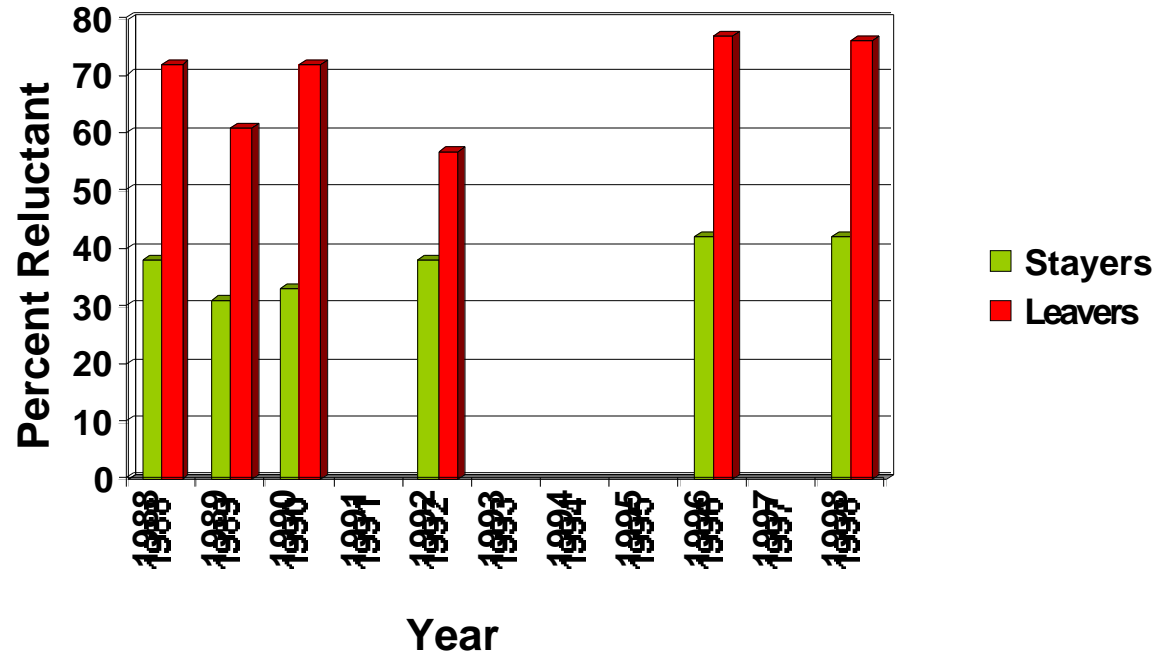
- High OPTEMPO

- ✦ Frequently mentioned by leavers as a factor in their decision to leave

- ✦ Especially stressful with short notice

- ✦ Better accepted if mission or job is viewed as important

Feelings on Plans Disrupted by the Army



“My current boss is taking time after hours now to work on team building. My family time is much more important than team building.”



# Family Issues

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## Family issues one of top two “push” factors

- **35% of leavers say family issues are their main reason for leaving**
- **100% of leavers say family issues a factor in overall decision to separate**
- **Spouse’s career/attitudes are of central importance**

## Representative comments include:

- **“Raising a family in the Army is bad, due to OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO. Too much separation from the family.”**
- **“My wife feels more comfortable with me out of the Army. The moving and relocating will get worse. In my last assignment I had no personal life.”**
- **“I want to be a father for my kids. I knew the Army would be time intensive, but the focus is not on taking care of families. Family support groups are lip service.”**



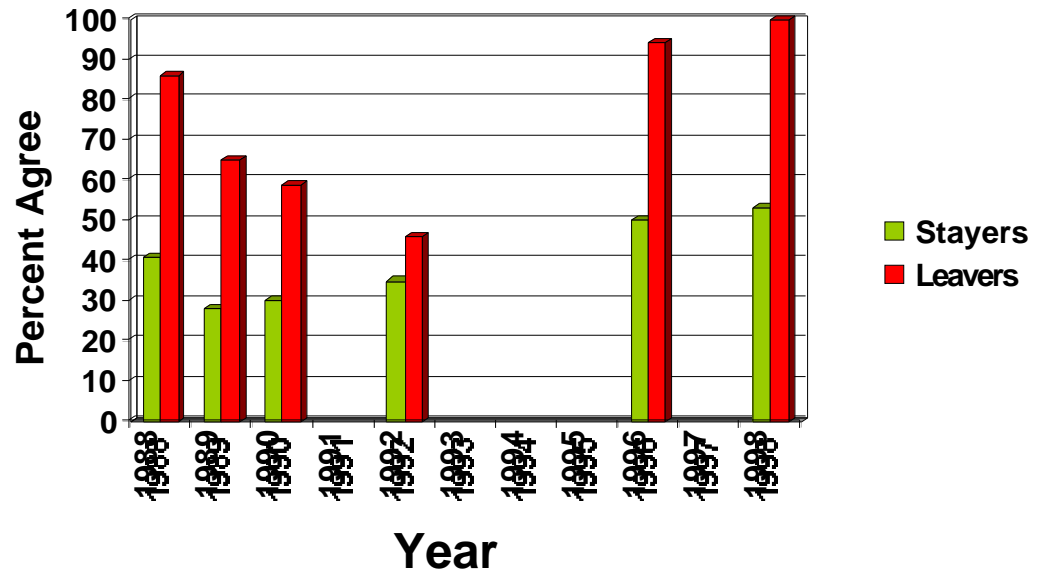


# LROC/SOC - Family Life

- Infantry captains throughout the Army find balancing family life and Army requirements difficult

- Leavers express greater conflict than stayers
- Sources of conflict include
  - ✗ Long working hours
  - ✗ Deployments
  - ✗ Frequent PCS moves
  - ✗ Effects on spouse's career

**Demands of Army Difficult  
On Family Life**



**“My wife’s feelings are number one. I want to consider her professional career, and she wants me home for the kids.”**



# Civilian Economy

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## **Robust civilian economy and civilian opportunities a “pull” factor**

- **94% of leavers believe it will be easy to find a job equal to or better than their Army job**
- **However, just 59% of leavers definitely have a job lined up**
- **63% of stayers thinking getting civilian job is easy, but more likely to question whether they would be satisfied in a civilian job**
- **Leavers are seeking civilian jobs that have**
  - ↳ **good opportunities for advancement**
  - ↳ **greater job satisfaction than their Army job**
  - ↳ **long-term potential for growth in income**

**↳ Civilian opportunities are an “enabler,” more than a primary cause, for leaving**



# LROC/SOC - Advancement Opportunities

- Leavers historically believe there are better chances to advance in their field in the civilian sector

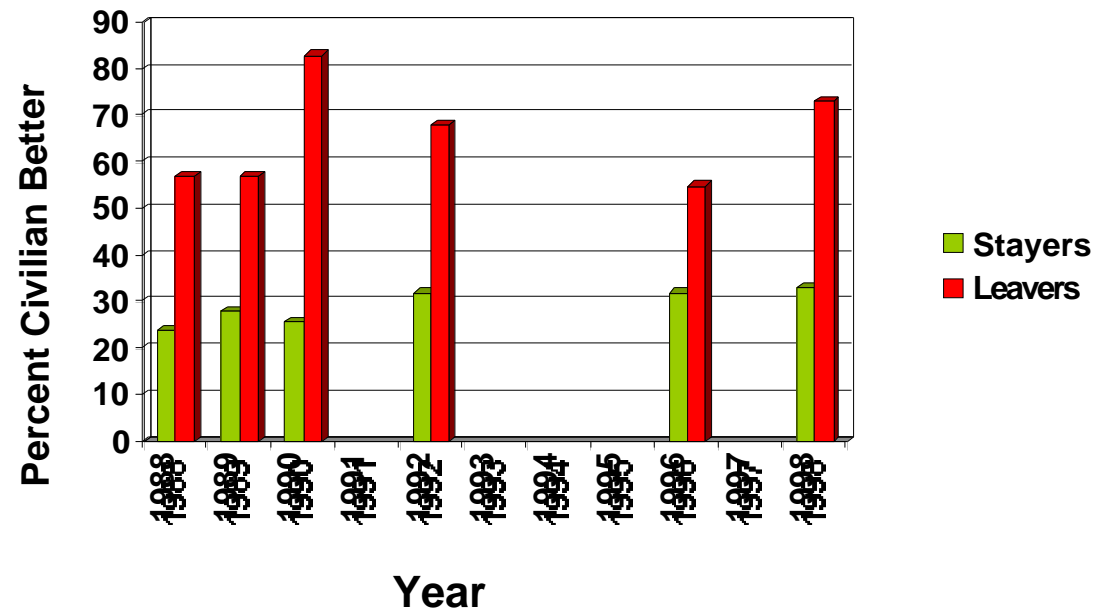
- Fort Benning leavers see better civilian opportunity to

- ✦ Further professional education

- ✦ Get more and better promotions

- ✦ Have good performance rewarded with higher pay

Opportunity to Advance in Your Field



“I am in my sixth year, and all I can reasonably hope for if I stay in 20 is two more promotions. Promotions are your measure of success, and the Army does not offer me enough room for advancement.”



# Other Findings

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- **Two main problems associated with Fort Benning**
  - ↳ **Some jobs following the advanced course result in lengthy delay in obtaining company command**
  - ↳ **Resources available for “Building 4” events, but restricted for supplies and training**
- **Few leavers report receiving meaningful career mentoring early in their careers**
- **However, 76% of leavers thought about leaving for at least one year before making their final decision; nearly 1/3rd for three or more years**
- **Some officers are reluctant to speak openly about career intent with their commander for fear of retribution or loss of command**



# Quality of Leavers

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**400% of Fort Benning leavers and 93% of stayers state high quality captains are leaving**

**“The quality of guys getting out is very good. The best of the best.”**

**“The best are getting out, leaving the mediocre to step into positions of command”**

**“Without a doubt, the Army is losing the sharpest guys I know.”**

**“The ones that are leaving are very good . . . The ones the Army should not let go”**

**“The ones with bigger goals are leaving.”**



# Summary of Findings

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- **The decision to leave is a lengthy one**
- **The decision to leave is based on multiple reasons**
- **Family issues and dissatisfaction with Army job/life are most frequently given primary reasons for leaving**
- **By time paperwork is dropped, little can be done to change the leaver's decision**
- **Pay is not a major factor in career intent**
- **A strong civilian economy enables career change, but does not cause it**



# Recommendations

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## Reduce disillusionment

- Teach the Army's "big picture" and Army career opportunities in IOBC
- Establish a strong value to unit missions
- Re-look junior officer utilization

## Improve mentoring

- Encourage commanders to improve mentoring of junior officers
- Focus mentoring on junior officer development in synch with mission accomplishment
- Teach mentoring techniques in IOBC, ICCC, and IPCC
- Encourage open dialogue between commanders and junior officers

## Provide opportunities for junior officers

- Enhance sense of responsibility and autonomy
- Stabilize assignment process and give priority to personal choice when possible