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POLITICS

CAN THE U.S. MILITARY HALT ITS BRAIN DRAIN?

The Pentagon worries its rigid personnel system is driving away the officers it will need for the conflicts of the 21st century.

By David Barno and Nora Bensahel

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When Defense Secretary Ash Carter took the reins of the Pentagon in February, he inherited a Pentagon coming out of two prolonged land wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, navigating a budgetary drawdown threatened by sequestration, and wrestling with how to remain the dominant military in a fast-changing world. As one of his predecessors Robert Gates noted, since Vietnam, “our record has been perfect” about predicting future wars: “We have never once gotten it right.”

His first speech was expected to signal his new priorities as secretary of defense. Some expected a talk in Silicon Valley, or at one of the service academies to showcase his message. Yet for his inaugural speech, Carter chose to return his alma mater, Abingdon Senior High School in Philadelphia, to speak to teenage students. Billed as a talk about the “Force of the Future,” many expected it to be about new technology, the Pentagon’s “Third Offset Strategy,” or the importance of cyber warfare.

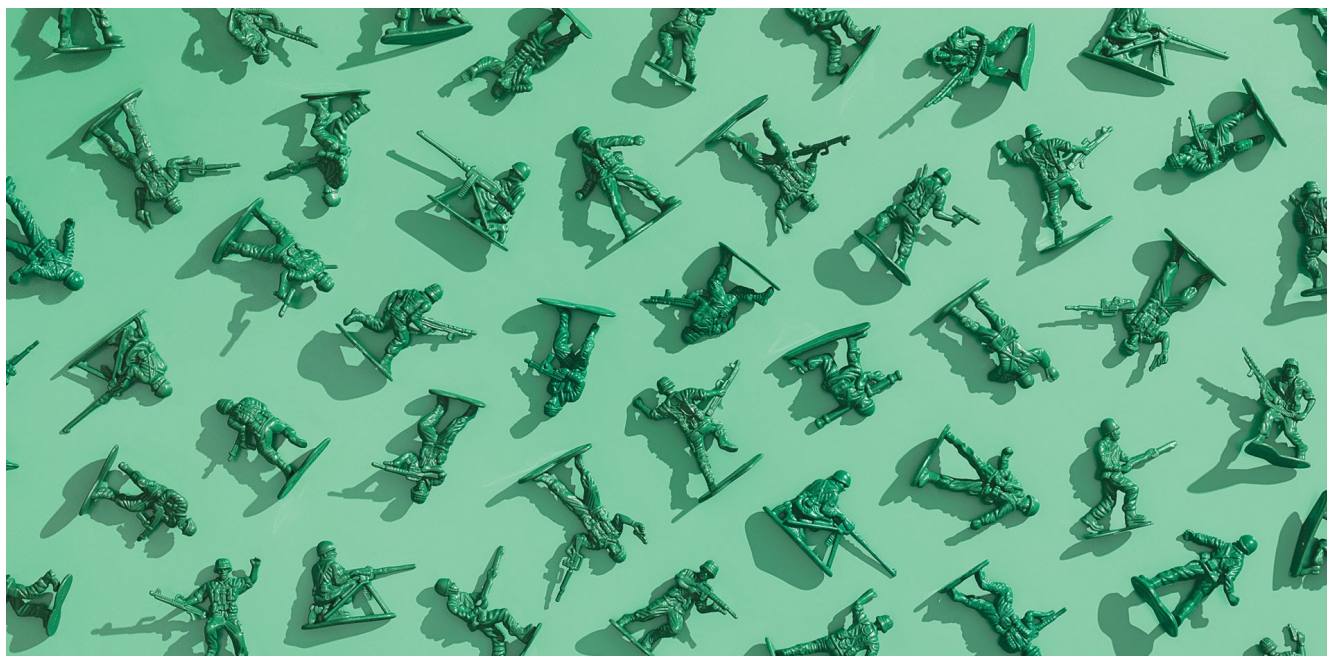
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