

## DoD Makes \$500 Million From Slots on Bases

### NCPG Estimates 56,000 Active Duty Personnel Have Gambling Problems

### GAO Recommends DoD and the Coast Guard Need to Screen for Gambling Addiction and Update Guidance; DoD Refuses

GAO Report 17-114 MILITARY PERSONNEL: DoD and the Coast Guard Need to Screen for Gambling Disorder Addiction and Update Guidance was released on January 31, 2017.

GAO recommends DoD “incorporate gambling disorder questions in a systematic screening process and update guidance” to treat gambling addiction like “other medically determined addictive disorders.”

**NCPG strongly supports these recommendations.**

DoD agreed to update medical guidance but did not concur with the recommendation to screen for gambling addiction.

**NCPG strongly urges DoD to screen for gambling addiction because:**

- Previous DoD large-scale worldwide health studies of military personnel showed lifetime rates of gambling problems at least 2x higher than civilian population:

Year	Population	Combined Rate	At Risk/Moderate Problem	Serious Problem
1992	Active Duty	9.1%	7.1%	2%
1998	Active Duty	10.3%	8.1%	1.2%
2002	Active Duty	9.8%	8.6%	1.2%
2006	Reserve/Guard	13%	10.5%	2.5%
2008	Air Force Recruits	8.1%	6.2%	1.9%
2010-2011	Reserve/Guard	n/a	n/a	1.3%

At-risk defined in these surveys as meeting from 1 to 4 of the 10 criteria for problem gambling. Serious gambling problem defined as meeting 5 or more criteria

- Risk factors for gambling addiction include individuals who are male, young, prone to risk taking/sensation seeking, use and abuse substances, experience stress, depression and PTSD--all factors known to be more likely among military personnel.
- DoD acknowledges its healthcare personnel do not address gambling the same as other addictions.

**Veterans also consistently show elevated rates of gambling problems:**

- 2016 Study of Experiences of Returning Veterans (SERV) study of 738 veterans found 4.2% screened for at-risk or problem gambling immediately post deployment.
- 2011 study of 2,000 veterans found 10.7% meet lifetime criteria for problem gambling.

Therefore, NCPG conservatively estimates that **2% of military personnel meet criteria for serious gambling problems and 2% meet criteria for moderate problems/at-risk gambling** in the past year. In NCPG's 2013 National Survey of Problem Gambling Services, of the estimated 5.7 million problem gamblers in the US only 10,300 (0.18%) sought treatment. Applying these assumptions (4% prevalence and .18% treatment seeking) to average force strength of 1.4 million gives estimate of **56,000 active duty personnel with gambling problems**, of whom approximately **100 would be expected to seek treatment** per year. An average of 120 military personnel sought treatment per year according to DoD.

**DoD promotes gambling by military personnel by placing 3,100 slot machines on OCONUS bases.**

- NCPG believes that since DoD provides and promotes gambling they have an obligation to provide programs to prevent gambling addiction.

**DoD profits from these slots on base were more than \$500 million between 2011-2015.**

- NCPG believes that since DoD profits for gambling they have a higher obligation to devote as much of these profits as necessary to fund comprehensive services to prevent and treat gambling addiction.

**NCPG will continue to advocate for DoD to more seriously address gambling addiction by:**

- 1) **Fully implementing GAO recommendations, including to:**
  - *"Incorporate medical screening questions specific to gambling disorder as part of a systematic screening process across DoD, such as DoD's annual Periodic Health Assessment, for behavioral and mental health issues."*
  - *"Update DoD Instruction 1010.04 Problematic Substance Use by DoD Personnel, to explicitly including gambling disorder as defined in the DSM 5."*
  - *Update Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp and Coast Guard substance abuse program guidelines to explicitly include gambling disorder.*
- 2) **Establishing responsible gaming programs to prevent gambling addiction by educating service personnel and their dependents about health risks of gambling, warning signs of addiction, guidelines for responsible gaming and where to get help for problems.**
- 3) **Integrating gambling addiction into joint DoD, VA and SAMHSA behavioral health initiatives.**

**NCPG stands ready and willing to assist DoD to build comprehensive gambling-related prevention, education, treatment, enforcement, responsible gaming, research and recovery programs.**

**NCPG will continue to work with all stakeholders, including Congress, to advocate for such programs.**

Additional materials on gambling in the military and veterans available at: [www.ncpgambling.org/resources](http://www.ncpgambling.org/resources)

**The National Council on Problem Gambling and our 35 state chapters are neutral on legalized gambling.**