

Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta says discipline, a mandatory national service system, and support of Veterans is needed to bring quality back to the military.

“Frankly, the only way to get quality is to kick ass,” Panetta said

As Chief of Staff, Panetta had to “go after people” if President Bill Clinton wanted to get something done. He would bring them to his office, sit them down, express what needed to happen and stay on them until the mission was accomplished.

“Otherwise, people will just move stuff from the inbox to the outbox,” Panetta said.

Panetta believes discipline and pressure are necessary. During his time with the DOD and as Director of the CIA, he learned the importance of ensuring people abide by discipline, do the right things and stay in good physical shape, because the security of the country depends on it.

“We’ve gotten a little sloppy,” Panetta said in regards to the military. “Discipline is essential to survival when fighting a war. The ability to put together a strong team that is able to work and accomplish a mission is what really counts.”

What good is discipline if there is not enough manpower to accomplish the task?

The United States Military continues to face unprecedented recruiting challenges into fiscal year 2023, according to [the DOD](#). Only the Marine Corps and Space Force hit recruitment quotas. The Army, Navy and Airforce are a combined 23,665 recruits behind schedule.

“Part of the issue is societal,” Panetta said. A [DOD study](#) reports that 77% of Americans aged 17-24 are unqualified for military service due to struggles of obesity, drug abuse or mental health.

The solution, for Panetta, is a mandatory service system— where young people are asked to serve in American democracy and make it understood that everyone has to give back to the country.

“I don’t care if it’s in conservation, healthcare, helping senior citizens or in the military,” Panetta said. “The ability to serve this country in some capacity is important. In return, we can provide a GI Bill to pay for education. That’s a hell of a lot better than the student loan program.”

President Joe Biden needs to send a clear message to the country, Panetta said. The ability for America to be strong in a dangerous world is dependent on support for the military, service to our country and remembering what Veterans provided to our country.

“I know we do Veterans Day and Memorial Day,” Panetta said. “But, remembering what Veterans have sacrificed is an everyday project. We can’t leave them behind. How we treat our veterans says a lot to the country about whether or not people are going to serve.”