

U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
Expected at 2:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 15, 1983

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

ON

RESERVE FORCES AND MANPOWER MOBILIZATION ISSUES

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

It is a pleasure to appear before you today to present our views on several important issues concerning the manpower capabilities of the Reserve Forces.

Because these Forces have been assigned one-half of wartime nonstrategic combat and two-thirds of combat support and combat service support missions and, in the event of conflict, will deploy with the Active Forces, their status and capabilities in the event of mobilization--of prime concern to this committee--also have been subject to a series of reviews by GAO.

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), the Reserve Forces represent a body of highly trained and highly skilled professionals whose capabilities have resulted in their full integration into the contingency requirements of the Total



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Force. In addition, DOD has noted many improvements that have been made in other aspects of manpower mobilization capability.

In our view, DOD's characterization of the Reserve Forces and its manpower mobilization capability represents a far brighter picture than is indicated by results of work we have performed. In sum, we have found that there are critical personnel shortages, that there are uncertainties about the performance capability of pretrained individuals who will be called to fill these shortages and replace casualties, that there are uncertainties concerning how many reservists will report when needed upon mobilization, that the ability to expand the training base to train the influx of new personnel upon full mobilization is severely constrained, that large numbers of old addresses in Selective Service files could complicate the administration of a draft, and that the training of Reserve Forces units is adversely affected by the lack of mission-related information and equipment shortages.

CRITICAL PERSONNEL SHORTAGES

The first issue we believe merits discussion concerns the degree and significance of personnel shortages. While DOD has pointed to its recent successes in increasing personnel end-strengths, nonetheless, if this country were to go to war today, there would be severe manpower shortfalls.

The Army National Guard and Army Reserve are particularly short of their wartime manpower requirements. As of September 1982, these units needed about 67,000 additional personnel. Furthermore, these shortages were more severe in certain

occupations than in others. For example, although Army Reserve total assigned strength was at 84 percent of requirements in June 1982, there were critical occupations which were filled at only 71 percent. Likewise, in the Army National Guard, total assigned strength, as of May 1982, represented 90 percent of requirements, but occupations designated critical were filled at only 77 percent.

The Army's Selected Reserve Incentive Program is supposed to be used for reducing such personnel shortages, and it is Army policy to target incentives to high priority units and critical skills. Notwithstanding, we found that over one-third of the incentives awarded in FY 1981 went to persons with noncritical skills in low priority units 1/. Although the Army has taken some positive steps to improve the targeting of its funds, recent changes to eligibility criteria have not completely insured that incentives are being directed to the most critical needs.

While expenditures for this program have increased fourfold between fiscal years 1979 and 1982, the Army has not determined the degree to which the program is reducing personnel shortages in essential units and skills or its cost-effectiveness. As a result, it is difficult, if not impossible, for you to decide whether the program should be expanded, modified, or cancelled.

1/Army Incentive Funds Need More Effective Targeting To Reduce Critical Personnel Shortages, GAO/FPD-83-10, March 2, 1983.

PROBLEMS WITH PRETRAINED INDIVIDUALS

The second issue which merits discussion concerns problems with the pretrained manpower pools. As we know, because of manpower shortages, prior military service personnel, mostly Individual Ready Reservists (IRR), must be immediately available as fillers for under-strength units and as replacements for casualties during the early days of a full mobilization before newly trained enlistees or inductees are available. While DOD has expressed a serious concern about a severe shortage of such pretrained individuals, we believe that there also should be a similar concern about the wartime performance capabilities of those who will be available, particularly in light of skill deterioration and the absence of skill refresher training.

Moreover, in the Army, these problems are compounded by abnormally large shortages of individuals with critical skills 2/. The most significant shortages are concentrated in combat arms and medical skills. To give you some indication of the shortfalls, in November 1982, they ranged from 30 percent for air defense artillery to 82 percent for medical personnel.

To attract persons to critical skill positions in the IRR, the Army recently tried a direct enlistment program (which committed individuals only to initial active duty training and periodic refresher training) and a reenlistment bonus program (which provided a \$600 bonus for each reenlistment). Both programs fell considerably short of achieving goals. Yet, DOD

2/Personnel Problems May Hamper Army's Individual Ready Reserve In Wartime, GAO/FPCD-83-12, January 31, 1983.

has submitted proposals to authorize bonuses up to \$1,000 for direct enlistments and up to \$900 for reenlistments. The Army has requested this authority, despite the fact that they have not determined whether the limited training undergone by participants in the earlier direct enlistment program has been enough to maintain skill proficiencies. While the Army plans to evaluate the proficiency of those who enlist in the new direct enlistment program, we believe that the proficiency of those who participated in the earlier program needs to be verified and considered by this committee before a new bonus is authorized.

To supplement available members of the IRR upon mobilization, some services have established plans for recalling retirees. For example, the Army plans to recall 100,000 retirees (under age 60) back to active duty under full mobilization 3/.

Although there is no disagreement over the long-term usefulness of recalled retirees, there are uncertainties about whether they--as well as members of the IRR--will be able to perform required tasks within the critical early days of a mobilization. DOD recognizes that without periodic training, military skills will deteriorate over time; yet about 98 percent of IRR members do not receive periodic refresher training and there is no premobilization training for retirees.

In addition, the Army has not completed studies on how soon and to what extent skills possessed by IRR members and retirees

3/Army's Ability To Mobilize And Use Retirees As Planned Is Doubtful, GAO/FPCD-83-6, October 15, 1982.

will begin to deteriorate. Of more immediate concern, however, is the fact that the Army has not finalized an IRR refresher training program for those skills it will require in the first 30 days of a mobilization.

Because of the uncertainties surrounding the Army's development of a comprehensive refresher training program, we view DOD's proposal to increase the military service obligation from 6 years to 8 years with apprehension. Since the extension would generally increase the time personnel serve in the IRR, we believe that the proposal should be approved by this committee only if there is a corollary plan to provide the training essential for maintaining members' skills. Further, while the services' have the authority to impose involuntary refresher training, their reluctance to do so on the grounds that involuntary training would be incompatible with the current All-Volunteer Force environment would compound this problem.

UNCERTAINTIES CONCERNING RESERVISTS REPORTING RATES

The accuracy of the service estimates of the numbers of IRR members and retirees who will report for duty upon mobilization also is an area of concern. Because illnesses, personal commitments, travel, and other reasons have delayed or invalidated the reporting of Reserve Forces personnel in past mobilizations, it is critical that the services develop the most accurate forecasts possible for reporting rates of Reserve Forces personnel in any possible future emergencies. Nonetheless, we found that the Army's estimates were not scientifically established, had not seriously considered the impact of reporting delays and

skill mismatches, and did not recognize the impact on reporting rates of differing political and public opinion attitudes toward the call-up decision.) In our view, periodic surveys which collect current and historical objective data on member availability would improve this process, the results of which are critical to acceptable mobilization planning and preparation.

TRAINING BASE LIMITATIONS

DOD's ability to train those new enlistees and inductees who, in the event of war, will be needed to sustain and expand the force also is an issue of concern. While the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force do not anticipate any substantial problems in adjusting their training bases to handle projected mobilization training increases, the Army faces a number of serious problems. Since 1979, we have issued three reports on this issue. Our most recent report found that the same problems reported previously still exist: that is, in the event of mobilization, there will be shortages of training personnel and many of the available personnel will be unqualified. In addition, there will be shortages of training companies and equipment 4/.

The Army estimates that, primarily because of equipment shortages, it has the capacity to accommodate only about 70 percent of the personnel it needs to begin training within the first 30 days following mobilization. This problem becomes more

4/Army's Ability To Expand Training Base Upon Mobilization Remains Limited, GAO/FPD-83-2, February 2, 1983.

severe as the days following mobilization increase. For example, the Army estimates that it has the capacity to accommodate only about 50 percent of the personnel it needs to begin training within 180 days following mobilization.

The Army's Inspector General made recommendations for correcting base expansion problems in a recent confidential report. Some corrective actions have been initiated in response to these recommendations; however, it is too soon to tell whether improvements in the training base will result. In view of this and the fact that over 3 years have elapsed since we first reported training base problems, we believe the Congress should closely monitor the implementation of plans developed by the Army for correcting these base expansion problems.

PROBLEMS IN PROVIDING CONSCRIPTS

The flow of conscripts from the Selective Service System to the Army following mobilization also is an area of concern. Specifically, undelivered or late draft notices could impede the service's ability to rapidly provide inductees to their assigned military bases during the early days of a mobilization because of potential class action law suits challenging the fairness of induction processing.

In a review of the currency of registrant mailing addresses, we found that about 85 percent of the persons who moved after registering in 1980 did not notify the Selective Service of their mailing address changes 5/. As a result,

5/Failure Of Registrants To Report Address Changes Would Diminish Fairness Of Induction Processing, GAO/FPCD-82-45, September 24, 1982.

address information for between one-fifth and two-fifths of the registrants in the prime induction group--those to be called first in the event of an emergency--could be outdated.

We believe the number of incorrect mailing addresses could be minimized by an expanded registrant communication program. If such a communication program is not successful, conducting a time-limited registration just before the prime year of susceptibility--the year during which registrants reach age 20--may be a solution. This would minimize the elapsed time, during which registrants might move, between the registration date and the date of induction orders.

NEED TO BETTER MANAGE TRAINING

The last issue we believe that merits discussion concerns weaknesses in current Reserve Forces training programs.

The Army's CAPSTONE program is designed to align all Guard and Reserve units under gaining-commands (those commands which will employ Reserve units in wartime) and provide units with detailed information concerning their wartime mission. This information is to be used to improve wartime planning and ongoing training.

Although the Army has taken steps recently to improve CAPSTONE management, the present management system does not provide the authorities in Europe and the Continental United States with the information needed to properly manage the program and to determine whether implementation is progressing satisfactorily 6/. The present system has obscured the fact

6/Problems In Implementing The Army's CAPSTONE Program To Provide All Reserve Components With A Wartime Mission, GAO/FPCD-82-59, September 11, 1982.

that many units had not been contacted by their gaining-commands, and some units had not received the required training and planning guidance. Improving the management system so that implementation progress can be properly monitored and corrective actions can be promptly taken as problems arise is essential to assure that training is properly focused. Otherwise, Reserve component units may be wasting valuable training time.

Equipment limitations also are impacting on the training of the Reserve Forces. According to recent estimates, about \$7 billion would be needed to adequately equip the units, and the absence of this expenditure is causing training-related problems. For example, 17 percent of National Guard and Reserve units nationwide recently reported that equipment shortages had a major or serious adverse impact on their training.

Further, Army officials do not know the full extent of this problem, nor do they consider training requirements when distributing equipment to Guard and Reserve units. In view of the significant number of units whose training is affected by equipment shortages, we believe the Army needs to address this issue on a priority basis.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we believe that the extremely important responsibility which DOD has given to the Reserve Forces has not been matched with a level of concern and management attention that is needed to equal that responsibility. The six manpower issues which we have discussed are highlights of this. Nonetheless, they are critically

important issues which require this committee's attention and resolution. Until this is done, there can be no assurance that the Reserve Forces will possess the manpower capabilities which are vital to our national security.