



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

~~4. 14. 1978~~

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PROCUREMENT AND SYSTEMS
ACQUISITION DIVISION

MAY 29 1974

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The Honorable
The Secretary of Defense

Attention: Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Comptroller)

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In our current review of the application of simulator technology in the management of military flight operations (code 952050), we have noted the following matter which is having a detrimental effect on the acceptance and use of flight simulators. Although our review is still in progress, we believe this information warrants your immediate consideration.

We have found that basic Air Force and Navy policies and regulations governing flying do not encourage maximum effective use of flight simulators. Since little, if any, credit is allowed for simulator time, flying personnel are encouraged to fly as much as possible to meet proficiency and currency requirements, to qualify for advanced aeronautical ratings, and to further their military careers. In effect, existing flight policies and regulations are hindering progress in achieving the cost savings and training benefits available through increased use of simulators.

Air Force Manual (AFM) 60-1, which establishes minimum annual flying hours for aircrew members, generally does not allow substitution of simulator time for any of these requirements. This policy appears to be contrary to one of the basic purposes for acquiring simulators--that of reducing flying time.

Navy general flight instructions (OPNAVINST 3710.7G) give limited recognition to simulator time by allowing aviators participating in the Proficiency Flying Program (aviators not assigned to operational flying billets) to substitute up to 10 percent of their 100-hour annual minimum flying requirement with time in certain simulators. However, the instructions state that requirements for instrument ratings and aircraft qualification must be flown in actual aircraft. By contrast, the Federal Aviation Administration now lets commercial airlines accomplish many of their aircrew proficiency flight checks in simulators.

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Some subordinate commands have also established minimum aircrew training and proficiency requirements. Although these requirements call for more flying hours than the annual minimum required by headquarters instructions, little, if any, substitution with simulator time is permitted. The Military Airlift Command (MAC), for example, allows credit for only 20 hours simulator time toward MAC's annual currency requirements of 180 flight hours. The simulator hours substituted, however, are not recognized as meeting basic AFM 60-1 flying requirements.

Flying hours also affect the career advancement of pilots and aircrewmembers. Although simulator training time may be recorded in the pilot's individual records, it is not given any credit toward satisfying the minimum flying hours required for advanced aeronautical ratings. Further, in both the Navy and Air Force, there is a prevailing attitude that flyers' opportunities for advancement to command positions are enhanced by having recorded large numbers of flying hours. As a result, flyers are motivated to accomplish as many of their training and proficiency requirements as possible in the aircraft rather than in flight simulators.

Current fuel shortages, high aircraft operating costs, and the acknowledged training and safety benefits of increased simulator use, all point up the need for updating basic policies and regulations to keep pace with advances in simulator technology. We believe these policies and regulations should encourage the maximum use of simulators to reduce flying by giving more recognition to simulator time in satisfying aviators' training, proficiency, and career advancement needs. We recommend that the task force you have established to study the use of simulators give attention to this matter with the objective of developing appropriate changes at an early date.

We would appreciate your comments on our observations and recommendation within 30 days for use in our review. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Harold H. Rubin, Deputy Director, or Mr. Raymond A. Hautala, Supervisory Auditor, of my staff on code 129, extensions 4325 and 6131, respectively.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, Government Operations, and Armed Services; the Secretaries of the Navy and Air Force; the Director, Defense Research and Engineering; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. > 00300
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As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions he has taken on our recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date

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of the report, and the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. W. Gutmann".

R. W. Gutmann
Director