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A STUDY OF THE 1970 ADMINISTRATIVE
REDUCTION OF STUDENT NAVAL AVIATORS

Annette G. Baisden

Naval Aerospace Medical Institute
Pensacola, Florida

1973

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A STUDY OF THE 1970 ADMINISTRATIVE REDUCTION OF
STUDENT NAVAL AVIATORS

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ABSTRACT

In August, 1970, adjustments in naval aviator manpower requirements led to an unprecedented release of student naval aviators. A representative sample of these student aviators was surveyed for the purpose of assessing attitudes, reactions, and impact upon morale of the forced release. Results indicate considerable disappointment and dissatisfaction as well as a possible unfavorable influence upon recruitment. In comparisons made between reinstated and non-reinstated students no statistically significant differences were found.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1970 adjustments in naval aviator manpower requirements led to the release of 509 student naval aviators. The conditions which led up to the forced release of students and the rationale in support of that specific action are outlined in a Naval Air Training Command (NATRACOM) staff briefing which is presented in Appendix A.

The selection of students for separation was accomplished by a special board convened in the Naval Air Basic Training Command (NABATRACOM) with the Training Officer as the senior member. Cutback quotas for each training squadron were specified in advance by NATRACOM. The board used the Predictor Score from the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory (NAMRL) Student Prediction System and all summary flight and academic grades earned by a given student in order to establish a rank ordering of potential cutbacks within each stage of training. The complete training jackets were inspected carefully for those students who were not clearly marginal on the basis of Predictor Score and summary flight grades. The final decision to drop or retain a student was a collective one based on as much data as possible. For historical purposes it is noted that the option of allowing students to select themselves in order to achieve the cutback was not allowed by command decision. The rationale was to select on the basis of quality of performance.

Since a large percentage of flight trainees enter upon the recommendation of a friend or an acquaintance exposed to the program, and since many of those released students might remain in the Navy, the Aerospace Psychology Department of NAMRL developed an attitude questionnaire for administration to

the released students for the purpose of assessing attitudes, reactions, and impact upon morale of the forced release.

The objectives of this study were:

- 1) To summarize and evaluate the attitudes and reactions of flight students to the forced reduction.
- 2) To compare the performance of the reinstated students to that of released students who chose not to re-enter aviation training.

PROCEDURE

The attitudes and reactions of the flight students who were released or discharged at the "convenience of the government" (COGs) were assessed by means of semantic differential scales administered at the time of exit. The scales were constructed to assess six specific attitude areas, which were identified from preliminary interviews of several of the COGs. These areas were: 1) the personal feelings and reactions, 2) effect on life goals, 3) attitudes of friends, 4) attitudes toward the Navy's mode of implementation, 5) the perceived necessity of cut, and 6) effect on recruiting program. Five scales were constructed within each of the six areas for a total of 30 test items or scales. This technique was selected in preference to the interview because of testing time constraints and ease in quantifying the data. Each of the semantic differential scales is defined by a pair of antonyms with seven possible intervals within them.

Term X ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ Term Y

Each interval provides a measure of the strength of an individual's disagreement or agreement with the antonym. Based on the studies of Osgood (1) the scales are defined as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| (1) extremely X | (5) slightly Y |
| (2) quite X | (6) quite Y |
| (3) slightly X | (7) extremely Y |
| (4) neither X or Y;
equally X or Y | |

In addition to the 30 semantic differential items three direct questions concerning reserve plans, reapplication plans, and overall reactions were included. The questionnaire which is contained in Appendix B was administered to 232 students, or approximately 46 per cent of those released.

As funds allowed, all personnel who were physically qualified were reinstated upon reapplication. The first reinstatements were made in April 1972. At the time of this report 116 or 21.5 per cent of those released had been reinstated. In an effort to investigate possible differences between reinstated and non-reinstated COGs, group differences on selection test scores, peer ratings, and training grades were examined.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table I presents a description of the COG sample, this study's subsample and reinstatements in terms of distribution across stages. AOCs comprised 68 per cent of the released trainees with the remainder made up of AVROC, NROTC, USNA, OCS, and Direct Procurement students.

Table I
Percentage Distributions of Total COG Sample and Study Samples
Across States of Training

	AOCs	Other Procurements	COG Total	COG in Study	COGs Planning to Return	COGs Actually Returned
VT-1	4.7	4.2	4.5	.4	0.0	43.1
VT-2/3 (Pool)	75.3	76.4	75.6	66.2	83.0	28.5
VT-4	1.4	1.2	1.4	.9	0.0	2.6
VT-5	7.6	7.3	7.5	5.6	5.1	2.6
VT-6	2.0	1.8	2.0	1.1	1.7	15.5
VT-7/9 (Pool)	4.9	6.7	5.5	1.7	3.4	6.0
HT-8	4.1	2.4	3.5	3.9	6.8	1.7
Total Ns	344	165	509	232	59	116

In general, the reaction to the cutback by COGs reflects considerable dissatisfaction (see Table II). The greatest dissatisfaction was expressed toward the manner in which the cutback was carried out (mode of implementation). Unfavorable attitudes were expressed toward all other factors assessed except "attitudes of friends and relatives toward your plight."

Table II

Reactions to the Cutback for the Six Sub-scales of the
Semantic Differential Questionnaire

	Percentages of Favorable* Reactions	Percentages of Unfavorable** Reactions	Percentages of Neutral Reactions
Personal Feelings and Reactions	30.4	47.4	22.2
Effect on Your Life Goals	21.0	57.1	21.9
Attitudes of Friends and Relatives Toward Your Plight	48.7	17.2	34.1
Mode of Implementation	19.5	63.3	17.2
Necessity of Cut	26.3	49.2	24.5
Advice for Prospective Recruits	22.4	54.6	23.0

*Rated slightly, quite, or extremely toward favorable end of scale.

**Rated slightly, quite, or extremely toward unfavorable end of scale.

The nature of the attitudes and reactions are delineated more clearly in Appendix C. For example, the major complaint regarding the mode of implementation was its inconvenience. It was also cited for being "unfair," "discriminatory," "unexpected," and "unnecessary." Only one third of the group expressed defiant attitudes for most felt that appeal procedures would be in vain. Over sixty-five per cent of the students sampled indicated they would discourage prospective recruits from entering naval air training apparently because of their disappointment and the adverse effect of the cutback upon their life goals.

In response to the question regarding plans for affiliation with the Ready Reserves, 46.4 per cent indicated they were going to affiliate, 43.0 per cent were not, and 10.4 per cent were undecided.

As shown in Table I, 59 students, which is 25 per cent of the sample, indicated that they planned to reapply for the flight program. Actually, 21.5 per cent have returned. A disproportionate number of returnees were Naval Academy graduates (30.2%)

Table III indicates the reactions of COGs as indicated by their one-word descriptions. These descriptions also indicate dissatisfaction with the cutback.

Table III
One-Word Descriptions of the Cutback

Description	Percentage
Absurd	27.2
Disappointing	17.1
Mismanagement	12.1
Military	8.8
Obscenities	8.4
Positive	8.4
Unfair	6.7
Surprising	5.0
No comment	4.2
Neutral	2.1

Less than 25 per cent of the COGs responded to the suggestion that they make additional comments on the reverse side of the questionnaire; however, as indicated in Table IV, all of the comments were critical. The majority criticized the Navy for poor personnel management and failure to consider personal wishes to leave the flight program voluntarily. A sample of the comments is found in Appendix D.

Table IV
Categorization of Additional Comments

Comment	Percentage
Poor Personnel Management	25
Lack of Personal Consideration	25
Poor Financial Management	13
Adverse Effect on Morale	13
Insufficient Time Allowance	6
Lack of Severance Pay	5
Failure to Explain Criteria of Cutting	5
Miscellaneous	8

Table V gives the means and standard deviations of 24 performance variables for the COG students who returned to training and those who remained separated.

Table V

Comparison of Returnees and Non-returnees on Performance Variables

	Non-Returning COGs		Returning COGs	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
AQT Converted	6.3387	1.2666	6.4464	1.3218
MCT Raw	59.0447	7.4012	59.3571	6.5477
SAT Raw	20.5687	5.2633	20.6250	5.2782
BI Raw	39.1534	11.5056	41.2946	11.4116
FAR	5.9840	1.2344	6.0446	1.3187
Naval Justice	48.7085	7.9253	46.0000	8.2425
Effective Communications	45.4444	4.9690	44.8750	6.1733
Pre-Naval Seamanship	50.9051	7.7611	47.9692	8.6148
Naval Orientation	51.1254	8.0793	48.9846	8.0163
Naval History	50.7356	8.6329	51.2154	8.3325
Naval Leadership	49.7254	8.4562	47.1192	6.6932
PT	50.4983	9.1199	49.8308	8.4754
OLQ	49.8678	6.0590	49.4923	6.8906
Peer Rating	48.6976	9.6345	48.2308	11.0576
AOCs Final	50.6231	4.2021	48.8333	4.1640
Math Ex	40.4437	12.5106	44.0522	12.0656
Physics Ex	41.7312	11.2031	46.2870	12.2409
Aviation Physiology	51.9031	7.6371	51.5439	8.9493
Engines	47.8750	8.5690	47.5043	9.1665
Basic Aerodynamics	48.1781	8.4207	49.6435	9.3075
Air Navigation	47.7912	7.3969	47.5000	8.0595
PT	47.3254	8.7131	48.0500	7.1272
Flt Prep Final	48.7577	5.1076	49.8774	6.1379
Meteorology	54.5833	7.1817	49.5000	7.5000

A comparison was made between the two groups to determine if their mean scores on the 24 variables were significantly different. A non-parametric test was chosen for this comparison since the N for a given test differed from group to group. Since the groups were considered not to be related Pitman's Approximation to the Randomization Test for Independent Samples was used for the analysis. A t of $-.1560$ was obtained ($p < .80$) and it was concluded that the two groups did not differ.

Of primary interest however, is the attrition rate of the returning COGs. Thus far, there have been three attritions--two flight failures and one academic failure. This represents less than three per cent of those reinstated. The individual reapplying for the flight program should be highly motivated and, therefore, the voluntary withdrawal rate of "Drop Own Request" (DOR) rate of zero was expected.

SUMMARY

In general, the attitudes and reactions of flight students toward the forced reduction reflected considerable dissatisfaction, particularly with the mode of implementation. Apparently because of their disappointment, the majority of students sampled indicated that they would discourage prospective recruits from entering naval air training and that they themselves did not plan to return to flight training or affiliate with the Ready Reserves.

The returning COGs did not differ significantly on performance and selection measures from the group which did not return.

APPENDIX A

HISTORY

COMMENCED F.Y. '70 WITH PTR TO BE 2750 AND AUTHORIZED 2860
(5% OVER PRODUCTION).

SPECIFICALLY - OF THE 2750 - 2090 WAS NAVY AND AUTHORIZED
TO PRODUCE 2200 NAVY.

FACT: WE STARTED FY '70 WITH ENOUGH NAVY STUDENTS IN
AND COMING TO PRODUCE 2150.

THEN CAME "70-3" AND CUT FROM 2750 TO 2510
CUT FROM 2090 (2200) NAVY TO 1850 NAVY.

ACTIONS DIRECTED TO ATTAIN THIS:

- (1) CUT INPUT
- (2) "POOL-DELAY" STUDENTS
- (3) OVER-ATTRITE

NOTE: PROBLEM MAINLY IN NAVY STUDENT POPULATION!!!

PROBLEM BACKGROUND

1. CUTS IN INPUT WERE MADE.
2. STUDENTS WERE POOLED 3-4 MONTHS AND NOW THESE SAME STUDENTS ARE, IN EFFECT, POOLED-DELAYED FURTHER DOWNSTREAM (POST NASC & PRIMARY)!!
3. ATTRITION AT FIRST LOOKED LIKE IT MIGHT GO SKY-HIGH AND GET OUT OF HAND.

NOW, HOWEVER, THE ATTRITION TREND HAS NOT ONLY REVERSED BUT WE NOW ARE UNDER-ATTRITING.

NOTE: ATTRITION

PLANNED TO DATE - 500

ACTUAL TO DATE - 360

140 TOO FEW

PROJECTED UNDER-ATTRITION - 120

(APR-MAY-JUNE)

POSSIBLE TOTAL - 260 TOO FEW!!

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS TAKEN FURTHER COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEM:

1. RE-REVERSAL (PUTTING NASC BEFORE PRIMARY AGAIN)

THIS ACTION JUST WHILE "POOL" WAS BEING WORKED OFF
WAS ILL-TIMED.

IT HAS RESULTED IN FURTHER DELAYS AND CVERLOADS
TEMPORARILY!

2. CUTS IN SYLLABUS AND IN-TRANSIT TIME (AS THEY AFFECT
THE '71 PRODUCTION PROBLEM)

THE CUTS EQUATE TO A SUDDEN (PAPER) EXCESS OF 285
AN INPUT EQUIVALENCY OF 335.

TABLE: CUTS IN TRAININ ; TIME

<u>STAGE</u>	<u>PRIOR</u>	<u>CUT</u>	<u>CURRENT</u>	<u>EQUIV.STUDS</u>	<u>INPUT EQUIVALENCY</u>
AOC INDOC*	2	1	1	32	32
OFF INDOC*	1.5	1	.5	32	32
FLT.SYS. (ENV.INDOC)	5	2	3	63	65
VT-1	7	1	6	54	65
IN-TRANS TO MERID.*	2	1	1	20	25
VT-7	12	1	11	19	25
MERID. TO VT-4	1	1	0	19	25
VT-4	7	1	6	18	25
VT-2/3	22	3	19	<u>28</u>	<u>40</u>
				285	335

* NOT COUNTED IN SYLLABUS TIME-TO-COMPLETE.

RELATING TO CUTS MADE IN SYLLABUS:

COMMENSURATE CUTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN COMPLETELY MADE IN THE
INPUT QUOTA. (AWAITING PERFORMANCE/EFFECTIVENESS OF OVER-
ATTRITION GOAL/BETTER FEEL FOR RECRUITMENT CAPABILITY.)

AS A RESULT: THE "OVERLOAD" PROBLEM BREAKS DOWN ROUGHLY
AS FOLLOWS:

1. OVERLOAD DUE UNDER ATTRITION (TO DATE)
200 EQUIV. STUDENTS (235 INPUT/175 OUTPUT)
2. OVERLOAD DUE EXCESS TIME TO COMPLETE
200 EQUIV. STUDENTS (235 INPUT/175 OUTPUT)

NOTES:

1. ATTRITION - CURRENT POPULATION IN "OVERLOAD" AREAS
(BEGINNING OF BASIC) IS PRIMARILY FORMERLY POOLED
OFFICER STUDS. APPARENTLY THESE STUDENTS ARE BETTER
(QUALIFIED & MOTIVATED) TO FORCEFULLY ATTRITE THESE STUDS
IS UNPALATABLE!
2. OVERLOAD DUE EXCESS TIME-TO-COMPLETE CERTAIN STAGES OF
TRAINING (=200)
PART DUE "CUTS" IN SYLL. TIME.
PART DUE: WEATHER/INSTRUCTOR SHORTAGES/T-2A A/C GROUND-
ING/UNDER-FLYING PROGRAM/ETC.

OVERLOAD PROBLEM

SOLUTION CONSTRAINTS

OUTPUT LIMITED (1850 NAVY IN '71/1650 IN '72)

DESIRE TO REDUCE TO PLANNED TIME (ASAP)

LEVEL FLOW AND MASTER SCHEDULING TRUS SYSTEM (ASAP)

"REASONABLE" ATTRITION

MAINTAIN QUALITY

MAINTAIN SAFETY

MINIMIZE COST-TO-TRAIN

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO SOLVE OVERLOAD PROBLEM

1. 200 OVERLOAD: (A) FORCEFULLY ATTRITE
(B) REDUCE INPUT BY 235 (DELAYED REACTION)
(C) ASK FOR VOLUNTARY DROPS
(ASK FOR EXTENSION AGREEMENT IF NECESSARY)

2. 200 OVERLOAD: (A) FORCEFULLY ATTRITE
(DUE CUT IN
PLANNED TIME) (B) REDUCE INPUT BY 235 (DELAYED REACTION)
(C) ACCEPT OVERTIME FOR THE FORESEEABLE
FUTURE.

NOTE: POSSIBLE FURTHER COMPLICATIONS OF PROBLEM ARE RUMORED
CUTS IN '71 & '72 PTR'S WHICH WILL NECESSITATE MASSIVE CUTS
IN QUCTAS ANYWAY!!!

APPENDIX B

NAME _____ Jacket No. _____ Date _____

Procurement Source _____ Stage of Training _____

Because of the unprecedented nature of this reduction, it is important to assess the attitudes of those involved. As part of this assessment you are asked to complete the following brief questionnaire.

Six areas affected by the cutback are defined below. Three consider your personal involvement while the other three are concerned with your view of the Navy. Please indicate the appropriate points along the seven-point scales which best describe your attitudes. This material is strictly confidential.

PERSONAL FEELINGS AND REACTIONS:

Elated	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Depressed
Clear	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Hazy
Disappointed	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Satisfied
Calm	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Agitated
Defiant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Compliant

EFFECT ON YOUR LIFE GOALS:

Major	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Minor
Relieved	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Burdened
Definite	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Indefinite
Pleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unpleasant
Untimely	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Timely

ATTITUDES OF FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TOWARD YOUR FLIGHT:

Active	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Passive
Failure	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Success
Sympathetic	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unsympathetic
Proud	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Ashamed
Fortunate	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfortunate

MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CUT:

Convenient						Inconvenient
Fair						Unfair
Absurd						Logical
Expected						Unexpected
Discriminatory						Impartial

NECESSITY OF CUT:

Worthless						Valuable
Timely						Untimely
Good						Bad
Hazy						Clear
Unnecessary						Mandatory

ADVICE FOR PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS:

Discourage						Encourage
Affected						Unaffected
Favorable						Unfavorable
Strong						Weak
Worthless						Valuable

Do you plan to affiliate with a unit of the Ready Reserve? Yes _____ No _____

Do you plan to reapply for the flight training program? Yes _____ No _____

Describe in one word the cutback _____

PLEASE USE THE REVERSE SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS.

Appendix C

Attitudes Expressed in Percentages for Each Questionnaire Category

PERSONAL FEELINGS AND REACTIONS

Elated	17.0	Calm	50.9
Neutral	28.0	Neutral	16.9
Depressed	55.0	Agitated	32.2
Clear	38.5	Defiant	32.6
Neutral	19.1	Neutral	35.6
Hazy	42.4	Compliant	31.8
Disappointed	74.3		
Neutral	11.8		
Satisfied	13.9		

EFFECT ON YOUR LIFE GOALS

Major	65.3	Definite	41.7
Neutral	16.1	Neutral	42.1
Minor	18.6	Indefinite	36.2
Relieved	18.2	Untimely	72.7
Neutral	30.5	Neutral	13.2
Burdened	51.3	Timely	14.1
Pleasant	17.9		
Neutral	27.2		
Unpleasant	54.9		

ATTITUDES OF FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TOWARD YOUR FLIGHT

Active	68.5	Proud	31.2
Neutral	22.7	Neutral	59.0
Passive	8.8	Ashamed	9.8
Failure	23.5	Fortunate	36.6
Neutral	50.9	Neutral	21.7
Success	25.6	Unfortunate	41.7
Sympathetic	80.9		
Neutral	17.0		
Unsympathetic	2.1		

MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CUT

Convenient	13.1	Expected	31.8
Neutral	11.5	Neutral	14.0
Inconvenient	74.4	Unexpected	54.2
Fair	15.7	Discriminatory	46.6
Neutral	14.4	Neutral	32.3
Unfair	69.9	Impartial	21.3

MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CUT (Continued)

Absurd	70.2
Neutral	14.0
Logical	15.8

NECESSITY OF CUT

Worthless	50.0	Hazy	55.1
Neutral	27.8	Neutral	20.1
Valuable	22.2	Clear	24.8
Timely	15.0	Unnecessary	49.6
Neutral	20.5	Neutral	30.7
Untimely	64.5	Mandatory	19.7
Good	19.7		
Neutral	23.5		
Bad	56.8		

ADVICE FOR PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS

Discourage	66.7	Strong	42.2
Neutral	16.9	Neutral	27.8
Encourage	16.4	Weak	30.0
Affected	67.7	Worthless	34.0
Neutral	22.0	Neutral	30.2
Unaffected	10.3	Valuable	35.8
Favorable	19.4		
Neutral	18.1		
Unfavorable	62.5		

APPENDIX D

Realizing the complex nature of our military structure, I was still surprised at the inefficient operation of the system so to speak. I can't express. Inefficient is the best word at present. Surely a company that has been in any business (like aviation for 50 years) could have a determined flow by now.

VT-1

I don't see how the Navy will gain. Some of us were cut that were nearly finished with training. This means the Navy may have spent upwards of \$250,000 on some people. It isn't even logical to drop this man and in a few months recruit another and send him through the same training! Why spend \$500,000 for 1 pilot? If nothing else give this man a leave of absence and then call him back rather than to forget the investment in him. I won't mention anything about personal feelings and inconvenience for lack of a civil phrase!

VT-9

"Join the Navy and fly your own jet." That I feel is bad humor indeed. This cutback I feel will have many adverse effects on the future well-being and state of readiness of the country. It degrades the honor of Navy wings of gold.

VT-2

Never suspected the Navy could operate in a manner so foreign to the ideals as were presented to me on commissioning!

VT 9

This was the closest thing to failure in my whole life and was quite a blow to my ego. It was hard to accept after spending 13 months training and having all your goals set on one objective and then one day its gone. Also the fact that I'd expected to spend the next 4 or 5 years in the Navy and possibly be career orientated and then one day you get a 30 day notice. I feel very bad about the whole situation and think the Navy should of handled it in a little more personal manner and consideration.

VT-2

The long range planning committee should have their jackets reviewed. Under the circumstances the cut was mandatory.

(In-transit)

VT-2

From now on, if I have any personal friends who are willing to give up 5 or 6 years of their life to learn how to fly, I will most certainly tell them to JOIN THE AIR FORCE.

VT-5

No respect for people who wish to stay in. At least one month's severance pay should have been granted. With the government's gross waste of money I have seen while in the service, severance pay would not be too great a burden on the budget. As I said on the previous page the whole stinking deal is thoughtless and shows little respect for the men that are trying to help in the defense of this great country. I plan to write to my congressman as I am sure many of my constituents are.

VT-3

To elaborate on the term "unmilitary" or maybe I should say this cutback was completely typical of the military. Since the day we walked into "Indoc" no one knew what the program was. The candidate just lives day to day. The situation didn't change after commissioning. There were (and are) many questions that no one had answers for. My major concern was that no information was given out prior to the cutback. As a result, strange, unnerving rumors flowed through the training squadrons. I would have to concur with those who would grade the policy makers an "unsatisfactory" in headwork.

(In-transit)

VT-2