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ARMY'S ABILITY TO MOBILIZE AND USE RETIREES AS PLANNED
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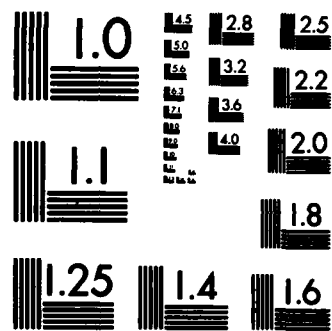
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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

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B-208840

OCTOBER 15, 1982

The Honorable John O. Marsh, Jr.
The Secretary of the Army

Attention: The Inspector General DAIG-AI

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Subject: Army's Ability to Mobilize and Use Retirees
as Planned is Doubtful (GAO/FPCD-83-6)

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→ We have ^{here is} completed a review of the Army's plan for mobilizing retirees in the event of a war or national emergency requiring a full mobilization. On the basis of this plan, the Army has preassigned about 90,000 retirees to report to military installations within 7 days of a full mobilization. By the end of September 1982, the Army planned to have about 100,000 retirees preassigned. Our review shows that the estimated number of retirees the Army expects to report for duty is unreliable and that, for those who do report, the Army does not know enough about their performance capability and refresher training needs. Furthermore, many local commands are not even aware that retirees have been assigned to them and, therefore, have not developed specific plans for assigning, using, and supporting retirees when they report for duty.

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BACKGROUND

After the end of the draft and the introduction of the Total Force policy in 1973, the Army made fundamental changes in its plans for using pretrained personnel in the event of full mobilization. These changes were necessary to counter a critical shortage of pretrained manpower, a shortage that did not exist when the draft was providing needed manpower to the Active Force and when large numbers of individuals were enlisting in the Selected Reserve. The Army currently estimates that it needs an additional 179,000 trained soldiers to meet wartime requirements, and its plan to recall retirees will help to reduce this shortfall. Under current legislation, the Secretary of the Army may recall regular Army retirees back to active duty at any time.

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The Army established its plan for mobilizing retirees in 1980; however, it was not implemented until mid-1981. Under this plan, recalled retirees will be expected to carry out assignments that will contribute to the efficient operation of continental United States (CONUS) installations and activities under mobilization conditions. Ultimately, this should free large numbers of younger soldiers for deployment.

The Army has identified about 180,000 mobilization positions that retirees can fill. The positions needed to support CONUS operations, and to which the majority of the retirees are assigned, include administrative specialists, motor transport operators, medical specialists, and infantrymen and armor crewmen trainers. Using personnel information kept by the Reserve Components Personnel and Administration Center (RCPAC), the Army matches retirees' skills with those skills required for mobilization positions. Once skills are matched, RCPAC preassigns--issues orders to--regular Army retirees and informs them to report directly to a designated installation within 7 days of a full mobilization. The preassignment also serves to remind retirees that they are immediate mobilization assets to the Army. RCPAC began preassignments in November 1981.

RCPAC also provides major commands and installations with listings of retirees it has preassigned according to their respective mobilization requirements. As of March 1982, RCPAC had preassigned about 90,000 retirees. About 72 percent of the preassigned retirees have been retired for 5 or more years and all 90,000 are under age 60. In most cases, the Army does not consider retirees over age 60 as mobilization assets.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our objectives were to determine whether (1) the Army's estimate of retirees expected to report for duty was scientifically established, (2) the Army has determined if current retiree skills meet performance expectations and if periodic refresher training is needed, and (3) plans are adequate for assuring proper assignment, use, and support of retirees when they report for duty.

We worked primarily at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and Army Headquarters in Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Headquarters, Ft. Monroe, Virginia; the U.S. Army Training Board, Ft. Eustis, Virginia; and RCPAC, St. Louis, Missouri. Training and Doctrine Command headquarters and its subordinate installations are designated to receive almost 60 percent of the preassigned retirees.

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We discussed with Army and OSD officials the basis for the Army's estimate of retirees who will report for duty and obtained data from the Army, the U.S. National Center for Health, Veterans Administration, and U.S. Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services on factors that can affect retirees' availability. We contacted these agencies because the Army does not collect information on all factors affecting retirees' availability. To determine how much the Army knows about performance capabilities of assigned retirees and the need for refresher training, we held discussions with Army Headquarters and Training and Doctrine Command officials regarding skill deterioration and performance expectations of retirees.

To assess implementation plans and the plans for assigning, using, and supporting retirees, we obtained a listing of retiree assignments and visited two Army commands (Military District of Washington and the Training and Doctrine Command), the Office of the Adjutant General, and several Army installations (Ft. Meade, Maryland, and Ft. McNair and Walter Reed Medical Center, Washington, D.C.), and reviewed applicable policies, procedures, and implementation guidelines. We conducted our audit work from May 1981 to March 1982, in accordance with our Office's current "Standards for Audit of Governmental Organizations, Programs, Activities, and Functions."

NUMBER OF RETIREES EXPECTED TO
REPORT FOR DUTY IS UNRELIABLE

The Army's current plan for recalling retirees assumes that 100,000 individuals will report for duty upon full mobilization. This assumption, however, is not reliable because data is not available to support it.

According to Army and OSD planners, this assumption is based on the following premises: that 100,000 retirees will be pre-assigned by the end of fiscal year 1982; that a high percentage of preassigned individuals will report for duty; and that for those who do not report, the pool of retirees not currently preassigned will be sufficient to provide qualified replacements. Although Army mobilization planners have not made a precise estimate of the percent of retirees that will report for duty, they believe it will be high due to considerations about retirees' character, including (1) patriotism, (2) long-term military dedication, and (3) willingness to respond in an emergency. Notwithstanding these characteristics, the premise ignores certain obvious conditions that can also affect retirees' availability. For example, it is likely that, at any one time, some retirees would not be available for duty because of hospitalization, incarceration, overseas travel, or other circumstances.

Reliable estimates about the retirees who will report for duty are extremely important since this can directly reduce the size of the overall shortage of pretrained manpower. If the estimate is overstated, plans would have to be developed to deal with a larger shortfall than is now acknowledged by the Army. Given that the Army expected to preassign 100,000 retirees by the end of fiscal year 1982, an overstatement of, for example, 10 percent in the estimate could hinder the Army's ability to meet manpower requirements during the critical, early days of mobilization.

We contacted five Federal agencies trying to obtain statistical data on factors that would affect retirees' availability for military service. Although very little data on the population of preassigned retirees was available, we did find, with regard to these retirees, that in any 1 year about

- 9,000, under age 60, would be hospitalized 1 or more days,
- 3,000 would become disabled or reach age 60, and
- 2,300 would die.

These statistics, while covering only a few of the factors that could adversely affect availability, indicate that availability could be less than is expected. Army mobilization planners told us that, while the estimate of retirees who will report for duty may not be reliable, they did not plan to collect information that could improve the estimate because they could not measure and quantify factors, such as an individual's attitude about a particular war, which could be significant.

Although the Army collects some data from retirees regarding their availability, this information is not sufficient for estimating the number who will report for duty. RCPAC sends an annual questionnaire to retirees for validating information such as address, social security number, marital status, physical condition, military skills, and current occupation. This information is used to (1) identify retirees who have died or become physically disabled during the preceding year and remove them from the pool of retirees eligible for preassignment and (2) make preassignments for mobilization positions. Questionnaire information, however, is not sufficient to develop historical trends of factors affecting the availability of retirees, such as changes in medical condition, dependency, or marital status. For example, a change in a retiree's medical condition may occur after the response to RCPAC's annual questionnaire is received. This change in status may not become known to the Army until it sends out its next annual questionnaire. RCPAC has a staff of about 30 people to answer questions from preassigned retirees. Data obtained from the inquiries, however, is not used for mobilization planning.

Furthermore, the Army has not tested its premise that it will be able to draw qualified replacements from its pool of retirees to fill all the positions for which preassigned retirees do not report. Although sufficient numbers of retirees may remain in the pool, they may not possess the particular skills required by the vacant positions. There also is likely to be a problem with replacements reporting on time since they will not have received a preassignment to alert them to the possibility of recall.

LITTLE KNOWN ABOUT REFRESHER TRAINING NEEDS

The Army's mobilization planners have established specific time frames within which retirees are to independently perform assigned duties. However, these time frames are not based upon scientific analysis of skill deterioration and refresher training needs. Accordingly, it is uncertain whether the retirees who have been assigned to mobilization positions will be able to perform required tasks within the critical early days of a mobilization.

The Army plans to provide on-the-job training to retirees after mobilization. There currently is no premobilization training, and none is planned for the future. Army mobilization planners told us that they expect about 62,000 retirees will be able to independently perform assigned duties within 45 days after mobilization, and the remaining within 90 days after mobilization. Army officials said that the 62,000 retirees would be assigned to mobilization positions that are not currently occupied, whereas the remaining would be assigned to occupied positions from which the incumbents will be reassigned after mobilization. We found, however, that the Army has no data on which to support these estimates. Army planners told us that the estimates were completely arbitrary. Furthermore, Army mobilization planners did not consult the Training and Doctrine Command to obtain its professional views regarding the expected performance time frames.

Although not specifically directed at skills performed only by retirees, a 1979 study by the U.S. Army Research Institute on "Retention of Basic Soldiering Skills" indicates that some basic skills deteriorate rapidly and that skill retention is affected by the level of initial skill training and the number of tasks involved. For example, the testing of 341 soldiers who had completed initial training during the previous 12 months showed the percent of soldiers that could correctly perform all tasks 6 months and 12 months after initial training.

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>6-month percentage</u>	<u>12-month percentage</u>
Grenade assembly/disassembly	42	0
Put on gas mask	55	4
Cardiopulmonary resuscitation	65	22
Light antitank weapon-inspect/fire	60	12

About 72 percent of the preassigned retirees have been retired for 5 years or more. Since retirees are not provided skill training, it seems probable that skill proficiency will decrease as the number of retirement years increases. Refresher training could be critical to retirees' performance capability.

MOBILIZATION PLANNING IS INCOMPLETE

In accordance with guidance provided by Army headquarters, major commands and installations are required to develop plans and procedures for assigning, using, and supporting (housing, clothing and family assistance) retirees who report for duty during full mobilization. However, at the sites we visited, specific plans and procedures were incomplete or were not developed at all.

RCPAC submits listings of retiree assignments to major U.S. Army commands and installations. These listings show the name, current address, military occupational specialty, and rank of the retiree. It also indicates the unit to which the retiree has been assigned. The assigned unit could be within the command structure responsible for operating the entire installation or a separate command structure that is a tenant on the installation.

Major U.S. Army commands received information from RCPAC on preassignments but did not give their subordinate commands and installations the information to develop plans and procedures for assigning, using, and supporting retirees. In other instances, installation commanders who received information from RCPAC did not give information to their tenants that were to receive many of the preassigned retirees.

The two major commands we visited--the Military District of Washington and the Training and Doctrine Command--and the Office of the Adjutant General had received information from RCPAC but had not developed plans and procedures for assigning, using, and supporting retirees. At the Military District of Washington, which would receive 600 retirees, officials told us that they were unaware of the plan for mobilizing retirees and the requirement for developing plans and procedures. As a result of our visit, however, these officials said that they intended to develop plans and procedures in the near future. The Office of the Adjutant General, which would receive 500 retirees, was unaware of the specific actions RCPAC had taken to assign retirees to its activities.

Training and Doctrine Command officials told us that they had not developed plans and procedures. (This command would receive 53,000 retirees.) These officials said, however, that they had (1) given installation commanders information which describes the retiree program and (2) informed command installations that RCPAC would mail specific information regarding preassigned retirees directly to the installation.

We also visited three installations--Ft. Meade, Ft. McNair, and Walter Reed Medical Center--which received information from RCPAC. None of the installation commanders had developed plans and procedures which specifically outlined the responsibilities of their subordinate organizations to implement the plan for mobilizing retirees.

The installation officials received the data from RCPAC but were unaware of the plan for mobilizing retirees and any responsibilities they would have. They acknowledged receipt of data from RCPAC but did not know what to do with it. Officials at one installation said that RCPAC had not provided instructions with the transmitted data. At another installation, the officials were not even able to locate the information provided by RCPAC, which included data on over 8,000 assigned retirees. Also, because installation officials were unaware of what to do with RCPAC data, their subordinate organizations were not aware of the preassignments.

CONCLUSIONS

The Army's plan for assigning, using, and supporting retirees during full mobilization is inadequate because the expected number of retirees who will report for duty is uncertain. For those who do report, little is known about their skill proficiency and its effect on how well they will perform assigned duties within prescribed time frames. We believe that considerable confusion and inefficiency will result upon full mobilization unless major commands and installations complete plans and procedures for assigning, using, and supporting retirees who report for duty.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

We recommend that the Secretary of the Army:

- Require RCPAC to periodically survey a random sample of retired personnel to obtain current and historical information within the last 6 or 12 months on factors having a potential effect on retirees' availability. Results should be used to develop more reliable estimates of retirees who will report for duty upon full mobilization.
- Determine, for preassigned retiree positions, the degree of skill deterioration over time and the amount and type of retraining that would be needed to sustain desired skills.
- When skill deficiencies exist, establish programs for retirees to obtain needed training on an ongoing basis or rescind preassignments.
- Oversee and monitor the plans and procedures developed by major commands and installations for assigning, using, and supporting retirees.

AGENCY COMMENTS

On August 26, 1982, we obtained oral comments from OSD and Army officials, who said that they agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

In commenting on the report's findings, the Army pointed out that the newness of the preassignment program at the time of our review could have accounted for some of the problems we found. We agree with the Army's view and have revised the report to show the dates the recall plan was implemented and when the first pre-assignment orders were issued. (See p. 2.)

To increase the numbers of retirees expected to report for duty, OSD said that the services should concentrate their efforts on maintaining accurate personnel records and contacting retirees periodically. However, both OSD and the Army agreed that quantifiable information should be collected and used to minimize uncertainty regarding the number of retirees expected to report for duty.

The Army said that it would study the deterioration of retiree skills to determine the need for periodic training. It believes that such a study will take considerable time but that, in the interim, its Training and Doctrine Command could estimate refresher training requirements.

The Army disagreed with statements in the draft report indicating that installations had not developed plans and the training of retirees. The Army said that retiree training was the responsibility of the major commands and not installations. We agree and have revised the report accordingly.

We received DOD's written comments (see the enclosure) on the draft report beyond the time allowed. It was too late for us to evaluate these comments; however, they generally confirm the oral comments provided to us earlier. Factual errors in the draft report that were called to our attention by the Army have been corrected.

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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 taken on our recommendations. This written statement must be submitted to the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not later than 60 days after the date of the report. A written statement must also be submitted to the House and Senate

B-208840

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

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; interested congressional committees; and other interested parties.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy given to us by your staff during our review.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "for W. M. Cornish, Jr.", is written over the typed name and title.

Clifford I. Gould
Director

Enclosure

ENCLOSURE

ENCLOSURE



MANPOWER,
RESERVE AFFAIRS
AND LOGISTICS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

21 SEP 1982

Mr. Clifford I. Gould, Director
Federal Personnel and Compensation Division
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Gould:

Your draft report, "Army's Ability to Mobilize and Use Retirees as Planned is Doubtful," has been thoroughly reviewed by this office and by the Army. (OSD Case #6044, FPCD-82-58, undated.)

Generally, the report is a fair representation of the status of the Army's Retiree Recall Program at the time your review was conducted (May 1981 - March 1982). Although not mentioned in the draft report, it is significant to recognize that the Army Retiree Program was not field implemented until the November-December 1981 timeframe - six months after you began your review. While the timing of your review does not invalidate the findings and recommendations, it must be considered when reading the report and determining the seriousness of its implications. As discussed with your staff, to help insure that the report is viewed in its proper perspective, a direct reference to the newness of the program should be included and GAO's agreement to do this is appreciated.

Since the completion of your review the Army has made progress on the findings and recommendations. Portions of your report will serve as a basis for future refinements as the program continues to evolve. Specific comments on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are attached.

The draft report contains errors or misunderstandings which are also commented upon in the attachment. It is hoped that these specific comments will be reviewed. They are intended to update the report and better illustrate the current status of the Retiree Recall Program and the efforts being made to better plan for the use of this pretrained manpower source.

Sincerely,

James N. Juliana
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Manpower, Reserve Affairs & Logistics)

Attachment

[See GAO note, p.4.]

Specific comments on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations contained in GAO Draft Report, Army's Ability to Mobilize and Use Retirees as Planned is Doubtful.

FINDING A: "Number of retirees Army expects to report for duty is unreliable because data to support assumptions is not available."

COMMENT: While we agree that the number of retirees we expect to report is not totally accurate, it is not because the data is not available. It is because the data is not complete and is currently being used to determine individual eligibility for recall rather than overall program showrates. GAO finding is valid.

FINDING B: "It is uncertain whether retirees assigned to mobilization positions will be able to perform their required tasks within the critical early days of a mobilization because time frames establishing independent performance are not based on any scientific analysis of skill deterioration and refresher training needs."

COMMENT: The Army Retiree Recall Program is in the implementation stage. All requirements for recalled retirees have not been identified. It is premature to plan for refresher training until all requirements and skill deterioration rates are known. It should be noted that most recalled retirees will fill BASOPS positions; few technical skills are required. (This was discussed with and agreed with the GAO staff.)

FINDING C: "Specific plans and procedures for the training, assignment, use and support of Army retirees in the event of mobilization are incomplete."

COMMENT: Finding is valid considering time of the review. The reference to training in this finding should be deleted as training is covered in Finding B. Additionally, the reference to specific plans and procedures for the use of Army retirees indicates a basic misunderstanding of the Retiree Program and the process by which mobilization manpower needs are developed. The retirees will generally be assigned in the positions which were validated as suitable for fill by a retiree of their particular grade and skill. There is no known need to develop plans for retiree use other than the mobilization tables of distribution and allowances, MOBTDAs.

CONCLUSIONS:

"GAO concluded that the Army's plan for utilizing retirees during full mobilization is inadequate because the expected number of retirees who will report for duty is uncertain and for those who do report, little is known about skill deterioration and its effect on how well they will perform assigned duties within prescribed time frames. GAO further concluded that considerable confusion and inefficiency is sure to exist upon full mobilization unless plans and procedures are completed by major commands and installations for the training, assignment, use and support of retirees."

COMMENT:

The conclusions are a compilation of the findings and the comments keyed to the findings are equally applicable to the conclusions.

RECOMMENDATION A:

"Require the Reserve Components Personnel and Administration Center (RCPAC) to periodically survey a random sample of retired personnel to obtain current and historical (within the last 6 to 12 months) information regarding factors having a potential effect on availability."

COMMENT:

RCPAC currently does a 100% annual sample of all retirees who have preassignment orders. Current information is collected and used to determine continued eligibility for recall. RCPAC will be tasked to expand their collection effort to include historical information which then can be used to more reliably predict show rates and trends.

RECOMMENDATION B-1:

"Determine for preassigned retiree positions the degree of skill deterioration over time and the amount and type of retraining that would be needed to sustain desired skill levels."

COMMENT:

Once all mobilization requirements for retirees are identified and validated the requirements for retiree particular skill deterioration information will be incorporated with on-going skill deterioration studies. Determination of deterioration rates will be crucial in evaluating the suitability of assigning retirees to positions which require current technical competence.

RECOMMENDATION B-2:

"When skill deficiencies exist, (1) establish programs for retirees to obtain needed training on an on-going basis; or (2) rescind the orders which call for the retirees to report upon mobilization."

COMMENT:

Recommendation is valid. Furthermore, any refresher training planned must be carefully considered in light of cost effectiveness and public reaction to recalling retirees for training only.

ENCLOSURE

ENCLOSURE

RECOMMENDATION C:

"Oversee and monitor the plans and procedures developed by major commands and installations for the training, assignment, use and support of assigned retirees."

COMMENT:

Recommendation is valid. However, reference to "training" and "use" should be deleted for reason previously stated in comments on related finding. Army plans to examine MACOM/Installation efforts during MOBEX 83 and the DAIG will be asked to include this subject as a matter of inquiry.

GAO note: The last page of the attachment has been deleted because it concerned technical points.