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REPORT TO THE CONGRESS



Management Improvements Needed At The United States Armed Forces Institute B-169062

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

OCT. 8, 1970

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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C To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

1 This is our report on management improvements needed at the
United States Armed Forces Institute. This review was made pursuant *D-467*
to the Budget and Accounting Act, 1921 (31 U.S.C. 53), and the Account-
ing and Auditing Act of 1950 (31 U.S.C. 67).

2 Copies of this report are being sent to the Director, Office of
Management and Budget, and to the Secretary of Defense. 5

Thomas B. Staats

Comptroller General
of the United States

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

The United States Armed Forces Institute has, as its mission, the providing of educational services and materials to members of the Armed Forces on subjects normally taught in civilian academic institutions. Its annual budget is about \$6 million.

To determine the effectiveness of the Institute's education programs and management of field inventories, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed the completion rates experienced in its correspondence and group-study education programs and the control over educational materials issued to field installations.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Institute has experienced low course-completion rates in its correspondence and group-study programs.

--About 10 percent of enrollees in the correspondence program have completed their courses during the past few years. (See p. 6.)

--Course completions in the group-study program have ranged from about 31 percent to 39 percent in recent years. (See p. 10.)

These completion rates were a matter of concern to Department of Defense auditors who reviewed the operation of the Institute's education programs in 1965. As a result of their review, the auditors recommended that a study be performed to determine the causes of the low completion rates and that corrective action, based on the results of the study, be taken. Agency officials indicated that action would be taken to accomplish the recommendations of the Department's auditors. (See pp. 8 and 9.)

When GAO began its review in 1969, it found no evidence that, during the 3 previous years, the Institute had taken action to carry out the recommendations of the Department's auditors. After the GAO review began, the Institute increased its activities to deal with the completion-rate problem. These activities included a study which would provide an information base on student nonstarts (students who, after enrolling in courses, do not submit lessons) and dropouts. (See p. 9.)

Properly carried out, this study could provide valuable information on the causes of dropouts and could enable the Institute to act to correct this problem. In addition, Institute management should be provided with information that will keep it informed of future trends on course enrollments and completion rates so that corrective action might be promptly taken when necessary. (See p. 11.)

Prior to July 1969, the Institute was issuing annually from its Madison, Wisconsin, inventory more than a million dollars' worth of educational materials to field installations and was keeping no records of the location, quantities on hand, or disposition of the materials. This condition contributed to USAFI's denying enrollment in courses to servicemen when there were stock shortages in the Madison inventory.

Institute officials informed GAO that, when the shortages occurred, in all probability educational materials were available at field installations and could have been provided to at least a portion of the applicants. (See p. 14.)

In July 1969 the Institute introduced procedures intended to improve its control of inventories at field installations. If properly followed, these procedures should improve control over educational materials. GAO believes that additional inventory controls to enable the Institute to better serve the educational needs of servicemen are desirable. (See p. 14.)

RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

GAO has recommended in this report that the Secretary of Defense take such measures as are necessary to ensure that the study to provide an information base on student dropouts and nonstarts is performed and is completed in a timely manner and that necessary corrective action suggested by the study be taken.

GAO has also recommended that procedures be established to provide Institute management with information on future trends on course enrollments and completion rates so that corrective action may be promptly taken as necessary. (See p. 11.)

GAO has recommended, further, that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the inventory control procedures initiated during the GAO review are properly employed and that attention also is given to other areas that appear to warrant management attention.

In this regard, GAO has recommended that consideration be given to conducting a onetime inventory of materials in the field and to using the military audit services, during their regularly scheduled installation audits, to validate information that selected field installations send to the Institute regarding the usage and disposition of educational materials. (See p. 15.)

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AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) stated that the Department of Defense was in agreement with GAO's findings and conclusions. Concerning GAO's recommendations, he said that the study to provide an information base on student dropouts and non-starts was well under way and that action had been initiated to develop information concerning future trends in course enrollments and completions. (See pp. 11 to 12.)

The Deputy Assistant Secretary stated, with respect to the GAO recommendations to improve inventory control procedures, that plans were being developed to conduct, on a worldwide basis, a onetime inventory of materials in the field.

At the same time, action was being taken to assess the feasibility of using the audit services of the military departments to validate information furnished by field installations. The Deputy Assistant Secretary also indicated that the inventory control procedures initiated during the GAO review were being properly employed. (See p. 15.)

The agency's actions appear to be responsive to the GAO recommendations.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

These matters are being reported to the Congress because of increasing congressional interest in the educational and training opportunities available to members of the Armed Forces.

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ABBREVIATION

USAFI United States Armed Forces Institute

D I G E S T

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These completion rates were a matter of concern to Department of Defense auditors who reviewed the operation of the Institute's education programs in 1965. As a result of their review, the auditors recommended that a study be performed to determine the causes of the low completion rates and that corrective action, based on the results of the study, be taken. Agency officials indicated that action would be taken to accomplish the recommendations of the Department's auditors. (See pp. 8 and 9.)

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The agency's actions appear to be responsive to the GAO recommendations.

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These matters are being reported to the Congress because of increasing congressional interest in the educational and training opportunities available to members of the Armed Forces.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We reviewed the management of correspondence and group-study education programs and the management controls over educational materials at the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI), Madison, Wisconsin.¹

USAFI, which has an annual budget of about \$6 million, is a field activity of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) and operates under the policy control of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Education). The mission of USAFI is to provide educational services and materials on subjects normally taught in civilian academic institutions to servicemen who wish to supplement their education, increase their efficiency and capabilities, or satisfy their intellectual desires.

In addition to the services at USAFI (Madison), direct service is provided to servicemen stationed in certain overseas areas by USAFIs located in Alaska, Panama, and Hawaii. These overseas USAFIs are operated by the military services and perform essentially the same functions as USAFI (Madison), with the exception that course and test development and the procurement of educational materials are handled only by USAFI (Madison).

USAFI offers over 200 courses at the pre-high-school, high school, college, and technical levels. Other courses are available through USAFI's spoken language, participating college and university, and general educational development programs. The spoken language program offers courses developed in conjunction with the Defense Language Institute. The participating college and university program makes over 6,000 college level correspondence courses from some 46 schools available to servicemen. The general educational development program is designed to provide education to servicemen from basic literacy through high school equivalency.

¹The scope of our review is shown on page 16.

The largest USAFI programs are those dealing with courses provided under the correspondence and group-study methods. Individual servicemen may enroll, under the correspondence method, in any USAFI course except the pre-high-school and spoken language courses. Correspondence enrollees are charged a \$5 fee for their initial enrollments. No fee is charged for subsequent enrollment, provided the enrollee has successfully completed his previous USAFI course. Correspondence enrollees are permitted to retain the educational materials provided by USAFI.

All courses available through USAFI, except participating college and university courses, can be taken by servicemen through the group-study method under which students attend classes where there are instructors who arrange for lessons and examinations. Enrollments in group-study courses are controlled by the education officer at the field location involved, and there is no fee for enrollment. However, the USAFI educational materials are provided to the group-study enrollee on a loan basis only and are to be returned to the education officer.

Since its beginning in 1941, USAFI has enrolled over seven million servicemen. During fiscal year 1969, there were approximately 350,000 new enrollments in USAFI programs, as shown in the following tabulation.

<u>Program</u>	<u>New enrollments</u>	<u>Percent of total</u>
Correspondence	141,000	40
Group study	106,000	30
Participating college and university	23,000	7
Pre-high-school	23,000	7
Spoken language	19,000	5
General educational development	<u>38,000</u>	<u>11</u>
Total	<u>350,000</u>	<u>100</u>

The principal officials responsible for administration of the activities discussed in this report are identified in appendix II.

CHAPTER 2

MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

COURSE COMPLETION RATES

About four fifths of USAFI's annual \$6 million operation is concerned with its correspondence and group-study education programs. Historically, USAFI has experienced low course-completion rates in these programs. For example, during 1967 and 1968 only about one of every 10 correspondence enrollees completed the course. Further, about one of every two enrollees in the correspondence program dropped out of the program without submitting any lessons.

The low completion rates in the correspondence and group-study programs were a matter of concern to Department of Defense internal auditors who, in 1965, reviewed the operation of USAFI education programs. Their report criticized certain aspects of USAFI education programs and made recommendations directed at improving the completion rates. Nevertheless, when we began our review at USAFI in 1969, we found no evidence to indicate that, during the ensuing 3 years, USAFI had taken effective action to adopt the recommendations of the Department's auditors and we found that it had continued to experience the low completion rates observed by the auditors in 1965. After we began making inquiries about the completion rates, however, USAFI took several steps directed at improving them.

Correspondence program

USAFI's program to provide educational opportunities to military personnel through correspondence courses currently involves about \$3 million of its annual \$6 million operation. Enrollments in the correspondence program recently have averaged about 140,000 a year. Although USAFI has not retained complete information on course-completion rates in this program for all prior years, we were able to determine from available data that for 7 of the past 9 years, on the average, course completions did not exceed about 16 percent and, during 1967 and 1968, were as low as

about 10 percent.¹ These data further show that, in some courses, completions were even lower. For example, of 306 enrollees in a high school shorthand course, three completed the course.

We recognize that completion rates of different types of correspondence schools are not fully comparable because of differences in various factors--such as types of students being served, admission practices, and methods of computing completion rates. However, available statistics on the subject show that USAFI's completion rates are so far below those of other correspondence schools as to indicate to us that the low rate of course completions at USAFI is a serious problem. For example, we were informed by a major private home-study school that, during the past 5 years, it had experienced a course completion rate of 31 percent, or about three times as great as that being experienced by USAFI. Similarly, other private home-study schools reported that at least 30 percent of their correspondence students completed the courses in which they had enrolled.

Directly related to USAFI's low completion rate is the large number of service personnel who, after enrolling in USAFI correspondence courses, never submit lessons--such enrollees are known as nonstarts. Historically, USAFI has experienced nonstart rates approximating 50 percent of total enrollees. This nonstart rate is higher than the rates experienced by other correspondence institutional suppliers, according to a study of correspondence instruction in the United States published in 1968.² In this study a limited sampling of various suppliers was made which disclosed that the nonstart rates experienced by other types of correspondence institutional suppliers (including Armed Forces correspondence suppliers other than USAFI) ranged from a low of 0 percent to a high of 30 percent.

¹ USAFI considers a course completed when the enrollee takes and passes a final proctored examination.

² MacKenzie, Ossian; Christensen, Edward L.; Rigby, Paul H., \$6.95
"Correspondence Instruction in the United States,"
(McGraw-Hill Book Co.)

USAFI officials cited a number of factors which they believed were responsible for the low completion rates. These included enrollees, taking a course as a refresher or for general interest, who had no intention of submitting lessons or taking final examinations. Other enrollees may have intended to complete the course but were stopped by unforeseen circumstances such as changes of station, undesirable study conditions, or fading interest in the subject material. While these may be some of the reasons for the low completion rate experienced in its correspondence education program, USAFI had not made any formal study which would identify the principal causes of this low rate and which would enable it to take appropriate remedial action. The need for USAFI to make such a study was brought to the attention of Department of Defense officials several years ago.

During 1965 Department of Defense internal auditors reviewed the operation of USAFI's education program. In the report on their review, the auditors discussed USAFI's low course-completion rate and expressed concern that USAFI had not determined the cause for the high number of course noncompletions or taken any action to lower the number of noncompletions. The auditors pointed out that, without sufficient information concerning its cause, the high number of noncompletions could raise doubt as to the benefit gained by, and the justification for, an annual investment of about \$5 million in USAFI. Therefore, the auditors recommended that a study be undertaken to determine the causes of noncompletions and that provisions be made to identify noncompletion trends so that necessary corrective action could be taken on a timely basis.

The need to identify the causes of noncompletions was also stressed in the 1968 study of correspondence instruction. (See page 7.) The study states that an institutional supplier seeking to improve its course-completion rate must determine the reasons that its enrollees are dropouts or nonstarts; and then the supplier will be able to make necessary changes to improve its completion rate.

Action taken by USAFI

In replying to the auditors' report, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Education), in February 1966, stated:

"The Director, USAFI has established a committee to study the long range trend of disenrollments [non-completions] on a continuing basis to determine basic reasons for the condition and to recommend corrective actions as appropriate ..."

When we began our review in January 1969, more than 3 years after the Department's internal audit, we found no evidence that USAFI had committed the resources necessary to undertake a study of the nature and scope recommended by the Department's auditors. Although USAFI did give some consideration to the subject of course-completion rates, this consideration primarily took the form of position papers or tentative long-range plans rather than formal action directed at determining the causes of the low completion rates. After we began our review, there was increased activity in areas concerned with USAFI's completion rates.

One of the completion rate projects recently planned by USAFI was a study designed to provide an information base on dropouts and nonstarts. Action on this project at the conclusion of our review had been limited to interviewing only about 25 new enrollees and two disenrollees. It was contemplated that this project would, in the near future, extend to many more personnel and would provide for comparing selected applicants' reasons for enrolling with their subsequent lesson submission and completion records. Analysis of these data should enable USAFI to assess the effectiveness of its correspondence courses and, in our opinion, should provide USAFI with a tool it can use to identify the causes of its low completion rates.

Another recent USAFI project is the institution of a lesson follow-up system. In May 1969 USAFI started a 16-day and a 31-day follow-up system under which correspondence enrollees who do not submit lessons during these intervals are sent follow-up cards. The first follow-up serves as a reminder, while the second requests the student to indicate on a returnable card his reasons for not submitting a lesson. Other projects recently initiated with the objective of reducing dropouts and nonstarts are:

- Evaluations of objective, rather than essay-type, lesson assignments.
- Studies of methods to improve USAFI processing time on applications and lesson services.
- Evaluations of the impact of using programmed and supplementary instructional materials.

While projects such as these have been undertaken by USAFI to improve the completion rates, we believe that, without knowing the causes of the low completion rates, the effectiveness of these measures cannot be determined at this time.

Group-study program

USAFI's group-study program accounts for about \$1.8 million of USAFI's \$6 million operation. During fiscal years 1967 through 1969, USAFI averaged about 120,000 new group-study enrollments. As in the case of the correspondence program, USAFI has not maintained complete information on course-completion rates for the group-study program for prior years. Using available enrollment and completion data, we were able to determine that the annual completion rates in the group-study program for 7 of the past 9 years ranged from about 31 percent to 39 percent. The completion rates for some individual courses were considerably lower.

In our opinion, an overall completion rate ranging from only about 31 percent to 39 percent, under a method of study which utilizes formal classroom instruction, indicates the presence of problem areas warranting management attention. This same view was expressed by the Department's auditors in 1965. Their concern about the low course-completion rates and their recommendations for improving the rates applied to the group-study program as well as to the correspondence program.

When we began our review, USAFI had not taken any substantive action directed at improving the completion rate of the group-study program.

CONCLUSIONS

We recognize that the effectiveness of USAFI's educational programs cannot be measured solely by course-completion rates. Some individuals may receive benefits from USAFI courses even though they do not complete the courses. However, the fact remains that, through the years, USAFI has experienced low completion rates in its programs, particularly in its correspondence program. We believe prudent management dictates that the causes of these low rates should be identified and corrected. In February 1966, in replying to the report of the Department of Defense auditors, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Education) indicated that such remedial action would be taken. When we visited USAFI some 3 years later, we found no information indicating that this action had been taken.

Since we began our review in 1969, increased attention has been given to this matter. We believe that the study being undertaken to provide an information base on student dropouts and nonstarts (see page 9) will provide USAFI with a valuable tool that it can use to identify the causes of its low completion rates and, thereafter, take the necessary corrective action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the aforementioned study is performed and completed in a timely manner and that necessary corrective action suggested by the study be taken. We recommend further that procedures be established to provide USAFI management with information on future trends on course enrollments and completion rates so that corrective action may be promptly taken as necessary.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The comments of the Department of Defense on a draft of this report were provided to us by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) in a letter dated April 21, 1970. (See app. I.) In his letter, the Deputy Assistant Secretary stated that the Department was in agreement with our findings and conclusions. In

his comments, however, the Deputy Assistant Secretary stated that our report draft did not take into account important managerial efforts taken subsequent to the internal audit of 1965, which were designed to establish a base for improved management techniques. Our review of the managerial efforts referred to in the Department's comments indicated to us that such efforts were not substantive actions directed at determining the causes of the low completion rates. For example, one of the managerial efforts referred to was "A redirection of a portion of USAFI's effort, February 1968, to meet changing educational needs of the Armed Services." We found that this effort was concerned with assigning highest priority to certain educational programs and was not a substantive action directed at determining the causes of the low completion rates.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary also stated that valid comparisons of completion rates may be made among the suppliers of correspondence courses only when all relevant factors are comparable. We agree that completion rates of various suppliers are not always comparable. However, as previously stated in this report, available statistics show that USAFI's completion rate is so far below those of other correspondence schools as to indicate to us that the low rate of course completions at USAFI is a serious problem.

In his comments, the Deputy Assistant Secretary has informed us that USAFI is taking a number of actions in an effort to overcome the completion-rate problem. Certain of these actions are related to our recommendations discussed above. In this connection, the Deputy Assistant Secretary stated that the study to provide an information base on student dropouts and nonstarts was well under way and that action had been initiated to develop information concerning future trends in course enrollments and completions.

The corrective actions that the Deputy Assistant Secretary indicated USAFI was taking appear to be responsive to the intent of our recommendations.

CHAPTER 3

CONTROL OVER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

USAFI has annually issued between \$2 million and \$3 million of educational materials, of which more than a million dollars' worth has been issued to field installations. Through fiscal year 1969, materials were issued to field installations and USAFI maintained no records showing the location, quantities on hand, or disposition of these materials. This not only resulted in a loss of control over educational materials but also contributed to USAFI's denying enrollment in courses to servicemen. In July 1969, USAFI instituted procedures directed at improving controls over its material issues to field installations.

MATERIAL ISSUES TO FIELD INSTALLATIONS

USAFI's annual \$2 million to \$3 million of material issues are made, almost exclusively, to three types of recipients: (a) correspondence enrollees, (b) overseas USAFI's, and (c) field installations. The correspondence enrollees retain the materials issued to them; thus, once issued, such materials do not require inventory control by USAFI. Issues to overseas USAFI's have been controlled through the use of quarterly reports which are submitted to USAFI and which show inventory balances on hand.

The material issues to field installations, annually exceeding \$1 million in value, have been made principally for group-study purposes and for registration section stock.¹ Although these materials remained available for USAFI's use, through fiscal year 1969, USAFI maintained no records showing either the quantities or types of educational materials at the field installations. Therefore, when stock shortages occurred in USAFI's inventory at Madison, Wisconsin, USAFI did not know whether the needed material was available in the field for redistribution.

¹The military services have established registration sections at certain field installations. The registration sections provide USAFI educational material to some correspondence enrollees.

This matter became particularly serious in fiscal year 1969. During that year, USAFI experienced stock shortages in a number of courses. As a consequence, more than 6,000 servicemen were denied enrollment in correspondence courses, and an undeterminable number of group-study requests were canceled. In our discussions with USAFI officials, they agreed that, in all probability, there was educational material at field installations that could have been provided to at least a portion of these correspondence and group-study applicants.

In an effort to overcome its inventory problems, in July 1969 USAFI instituted several procedures to improve control over educational materials. One of these was a follow-up procedure intended to ensure the return to USAFI of unneeded group-study issues. Under this procedure, field installations are required to periodically report to USAFI the status of its group-study materials and, if such a report is not received on time, appropriate follow-up is to be made. Further, USAFI has restricted the materials available for replenishment of registration section stock for almost all courses. Continuation of these restrictions should ultimately result in the centralization at USAFI of substantially all correspondence issues except those made by overseas USAFI's.

We believe that, if the inventory control procedures recently initiated by USAFI are effectively carried out, there should be improvement in USAFI's management of its educational materials. We note, however, that the following areas relating to material management, warrant attention by USAFI:

- USAFI has not determined the quantity and type of educational material on hand at registration sections.
- USAFI has not determined the quantity of group-study material issued prior to the new follow-up procedures and still in the field.

CONCLUSIONS

Providing educational materials is a significant part of USAFI's operations; thus, sound materials control

procedures are necessary for the effective management of its education programs. As previously indicated, we believe that, if the procedures initiated since July 1969 are effectively carried out, they should improve USAFI's control over educational materials. We believe, however, that further improvement is needed to enable USAFI to best serve the educational needs of servicemen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the procedures USAFI initiated during our review are properly carried out and that attention also is given to the other areas, indicated in this chapter, appearing to warrant management attention. In this regard, we recommend that consideration be given to conducting a onetime inventory of materials in the field and to the use of the military audit services, during their regularly scheduled installation audits, to validate the information that selected field installations send to USAFI regarding the usage and disposition of USAFI educational materials.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In his letter of April 21, 1970, providing us with the Department of Defense's comments on the report draft, the Deputy Assistant Secretary concurred with our findings concerning the need for improving the management of educational materials. Moreover, he stated that action had been or was being taken on our recommendations for improving materials controls. In this regard, the Deputy Assistant Secretary stated that plans were being developed to conduct, on a worldwide basis, a onetime inventory of materials in the field. At the same time, action has been taken to assess the feasibility of using the audit services of the military departments to validate information furnished from field installations. The Deputy Assistant Secretary also indicated that inventory control procedures initiated during our review were being properly employed.

These actions appear to be responsive to our recommendations.

CHAPTER 4

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Our review was initiated with an orientation visit to USAFI in January 1969, at which time we inquired into the completion rates being experienced in the correspondence and group-study programs. Our detailed examination was performed during the period July through November 1969. In our review we directed our attention principally at (1) course-completion rates and USAFI's efforts to improve the rates and (2) management controls over educational materials.

Our examination of USAFI's course completions included a review of pertinent data regarding enrollments, nonstarts, dropouts, and completions and related records. During our review we interviewed management and administrative officials regarding the operation of the correspondence and group-study programs. In addition, we reviewed information relating to the course-completion experience of other correspondence institutions, and examined the report of the Department's 1965 audit.

Our examination of the management of educational materials included reviewing the material control procedures established by USAFI and interviewing USAFI officials. We also examined available records and made tests of selected transactions as deemed necessary.

APPENDIXES

18



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

21 APR 1970

MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. Charles M. Bailey
Director, Defense Division
U. S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Bailey:

This is in reply to your draft report of February 16, 1970 on "Low Completion Rates of Courses Offered by the United States Armed Forces Institute," (OSD Case #3080).

The report indicates that USAFI has experienced low course completion rates in its correspondence and group study programs, and that USAFI had recently taken appropriate actions to accomplish management improvements.

Additionally, the report indicates that educational material control procedures prior to July 1969 were deficient but that action required to improve the control procedures had been initiated.

We concur with your findings concerning the needs for improvement in management of the educational programs and educational materials. We believe that much remains to be done and plan to seek every avenue to achieve improvements. We suggest, however, that your draft report does not give sufficient consideration to the universal complexity of the problem of correspondence education and to the substantive actions taken at USAFI prior to the visit of your team.

Attached are detailed comments on your report.

Sincerely,


W. P. Mack
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
Deputy

Enclosure

DoD Comments on the GAO Draft Report Entitled "Low Completion Rate
of Courses Offered by United States Armed Forces Institute"

The Department of Defense is in agreement with the findings and conclusions of the General Accounting Office concerning low course completion rates in United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) correspondence and group study programs. We want better completion rates and concur wholeheartedly with the recommendations of the General Accounting Office in this regard.

We feel it necessary, however, to point out that the draft report does not take into account important managerial efforts taken subsequent to the internal audit of 1965 which were designed to establish a base for improved management techniques. These efforts included:

(1) A redirection of a portion of USAFI's effort, February 1968, to meet changing educational needs of the Armed Services.

(2) The development of USAFI objectives, February 1968, to guide the development and management of educational programs.

(3) The development of criteria for establishing and continuing USAFI courses, April 1968.

(4) Reorganization of USAFI to focus more resources on educational administration, Guidance, Counseling, Educational Research, and Management, May 1968.

(5) Establishment of a policy concerning the role of USAFI in occupational education, October 1968.

(6) Review of all on-going USAFI programs in terms of enrollments, completions and priorities; establishment of data to measure completion rates by courses.

(7) Initiation of a 5 Year planning concept.

With respect to the findings on low completion rates, we agree that the effectiveness of USAFI's educational program cannot be measured solely by course completion rates and that some educational benefits may be gained by those who do not complete the USAFI courses.

A study designated as "Correspondence Education Research Project (CERP)," financed by the Carnegie Corporation and authored by MacKinzie, Christiansen, and Rigby (copyrighted 1968 by McGraw Hill Book Company, Incorporated) quotes Dr. Gayle B. Childs of the University of Nebraska, a long-time director and researcher in correspondence education programs:

"In regard to completion rates, it must be borne in mind that a completion rate of 100 percent will never be attained in correspondence study courses. Many people enroll in such courses with no intention of completing the work. For example, some students, who are preparing to enter college, register for mathematics as a refresher course before taking entrance examinations. These students drop out when they feel they have acquired what they need to know... Again, not all high schools require the completion of a correspondence course before granting credit... In all of the above cases, the purpose for which the pupil enrolled was accomplished even though the registration is recorded at the correspondence center as not having been completed. Completion percentages are therefore deceptively low."

Without minimizing the importance of seeking substantial improvements in completion rates at USAFI, we must point out that the term "completion rate" is imprecise in correspondence education. Valid comparisons of completion rates may be made among the suppliers of correspondence courses only when all relevant factors are comparable.

In a recent survey conducted by USAFI among suppliers of correspondence courses, a variety of methods were reported for computing completion rates. The CERP study concludes on page 99, "Thus, course completion statistics can be extremely deceptive... course completion statistics can be doubly misleading if one attempts to generalize from them."

USAFI's efforts will be directed toward attaining the best returns from its educational programs. This will involve substantial improvements in completion rates. But we want the record to be clear that completion rates alone will not measure the effectiveness of the USAFI educational programs.

With respect to the recommendations of the General Accounting Office that USAFI take measures to provide an information base and corrective actions concerning student nonstarts and dropouts, following is a summation of the actions USAFI is taking, several of which are mentioned in the draft report:

(1) USAFI is seeking to provide an information base on student dropouts and nonstarts. A specially designed questionnaire was sent to a sample of 1,000 correspondence enrollees and the response rate has been about 80%. The data collected will be analyzed in relation to lesson submission and course completion so as to provide a basis for analyzing nonstarts and dropouts. Extensive analyses cannot be done until the students have either completed the courses or have been disenrolled (under present procedures the student is allowed 12 months from the date of the enrollment to study the course and take the USAFI prescribed test).

(2) On an experimental basis, USAFI is sending follow-up cards 3 weeks and 6 weeks after enrollment to students who have not submitted lesson assignments. The second card contains a brief questionnaire which the student is requested to complete and return to USAFI. Analysis of these replies gives some indication of the reasons for nonstarts. Definitive analyses on a course-by-course basis will be done when the number of respondents is sufficiently large.

(3) A preliminary questionnaire has been developed to solicit information from course disenrollees. USAFI is presently exploring the means by which disenrollees might be located and surveyed.

(4) In order to develop information concerning future trends in course enrollments and to enhance possibilities of course completion, a series of preregistration counseling booklets are being developed. These

will supplement field counseling services and provide the prospective USAFI enrollee with introductory course information to guide his decision. To date, preregistration booklets have been developed for "Principles of Accounting," "United States History," "Beginning Algebra," and "Mechanical Drawing."

(5) "Student Request for Assistance" form has been designed and distributed to each USAFI correspondence student along with a supply of USAFI franked self-addressed envelopes. This form should facilitate communication between the USAFI student and USAFI staff personnel, thus providing additional informational and motivational support.

(6) USAFI is experimenting with new courses and formats and techniques for course development and presentation. The aim is to improve the courses and thereby encourage completion by enrollees.

(7) Priority has been given to the development of a more adequate information base on dropouts and nonstarts in correspondence study because of the substantially lower completion rates in correspondence than in group study courses. USAFI is, however, moving in the direction of a more comprehensive picture of activity in the group study area. The introduction of the group study roster during 1968 has provided more complete information on group study enrollments and completions at individual military installations. The examination of such programs is expected to assist in identifying factors affecting group study completion rates.

With respect to the General Accounting Office recommendation concerning inventory control procedures, USAFI has taken the following action:

(1) Established a computerized materials control and follow-up system which permits USAFI to account for course materials provided for group study purposes.

(2) Recalled course materials from Registration and Testing Sections where the volume of activity did not justify the retention of the materials.

(3) Instituted a publicity campaign to encourage the judicious use of educational materials and provide for the return of group study materials upon completion of the course.

With regard to the recommendation that a one-time inventory of materials in the field be conducted, plans to accomplish this on a world-wide basis are presently being developed. At the same time action has been taken with the Military Departments to assess the feasibility of using their audit services to validate information furnished from field installations.

We will continue to pursue vigorously the search for ways of improving the completion rate of USAFI correspondence and group study courses, and insure that appropriate inventory control procedures are properly implemented.

APPENDIX II

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF
ACTIVITIES DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT

	<u>Tenure of office</u>	
	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
<u>DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE</u>		
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE:		
Melvin R. Laird	Jan. 1969	Present
Clark M. Clifford	Mar. 1968	Jan. 1969
Robert S. McNamara	Jan. 1961	Feb. 1968
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS):		
Roger T. Kelley	Mar. 1969	Present
Vice Admiral W. P. Mack (act- ing)	Feb. 1969	Mar. 1969
Alfred B. Fitt	Oct. 1967	Jan. 1969
Thomas D. Morris	Oct. 1965	Sept. 1967
Norman S. Paul	Aug. 1962	Sept. 1965
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DE- FENSE (EDUCATION):		
Dr. George C. S. Benson	Nov. 1969	Present
Dr. Nathan Brodsky (acting)	July 1968	Nov. 1969
Dr. Lynn M. Bartlett	July 1965	July 1968
DIRECTOR, UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES INSTITUTE:		
Dr. Harold E. Simmons	Jan. 1970	Present
Dr. Wilbur L. Brothers (act- ing)	July 1969	Jan. 1970
Dr. Homer Kempfer	Oct. 1967	July 1969
Dr. Wilbur L. Brothers (act- ing)	Apr. 1967	Oct. 1967
C. L. Munden	Jan. 1962	Apr. 1967