



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

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APR 1 1974

The Honorable
The Secretary of Defense 5

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We reviewed the TRANSITION Program shortly after its initiation in 1968 and reported to the Congress in December 1969 that improvements were necessary to achieve program objectives. In reply, your office expressed an awareness of the problems and identified several measures which would be taken to raise the level of program accomplishment.

We recently completed a followup review of the TRANSITION Program. This review was primarily an evaluation of the Program at the installation level. The outreach, counseling, training, and job placement phases were evaluated at Fort Bragg, Fort Riley, Fort Leonard Wood, San Diego Naval Station, March Air Force Base, Camp Lejeune, and the Skill Center at Forbes Air Force Base. We also evaluated the Program's overall management in the context of direction, control, and surveillance of its operations at the departmental level.

Although congressional action has terminated the TRANSITION Program in its present mode, we believe that the results of our review may benefit your planning for any future programs that would have similar or related objectives. With this in mind, we are providing the following summary of our suggestions and illustrations of our findings on which those suggestions are based.

--To effectively reach the target group of such programs, we suggest that program administration at the local level include disciplined controls to

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insure that the group is identified, contacted, and properly informed. The installations we visited had not established controls to insure that they identified servicemen most in need of training (priority servicemen) and contacted them about the TRANSITION Program. Many who needed training did not participate in the Program because they were not informed about it or because their commanding officers would not release them from duty. Additionally, many who did participate were not priority servicemen. To avoid these circumstances, identification and contact activities should be limited to those servicemen who have stated their desires to leave the service and who need training in civilian skills.

--To insure servicemen of viable and beneficial vocational guidance, we suggest that comprehensive and professional counseling services be provided. At the installations visited many servicemen reported as counseled did not receive individual guidance but were given only general information about the TRANSITION Program and materials on such matters as veterans' benefits. Individual guidance counseling sessions appeared to be primarily an administrative process in which emphasis was on enrolling servicemen in vocational training courses available at the installations. We further found that most counselors did not have prior training or experience in guidance counseling and neither the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) nor the services provided training. Counselors also advised us of various constraints, including lack of access to personnel records, aptitude and academic testing capability, and appropriate job information. Delineating the target group so that available professional service may be concentrated on those most in need should result in a higher level of effective and relevant counseling.

- To better prepare separating servicemen for a satisfactory reentry into the civilian workforce, we suggest vocational training that would qualify them for available and attractive employment. Many TRANSITION Program courses were oriented toward entry-level skills and were very brief. Followup questionnaires and our personal contacts with separated servicemen indicated that many could not qualify for available jobs because of insufficient or inadequate training. Procedures were lacking for determining job openings in the communities where the servicemen planned to reside. Consequently servicemen could not be assured that they could, even if adequately trained, find employment in the skills for which they were trained. A wide spectrum of vocational training is available to veterans through Department of Labor and Veterans Administration programs, as well as public and private institutions. These appear to offer a more desirable alternative, and procedures could be designed to provide for preseparation enrollment in such programs with actual training to begin after separation.
- To increase the effectiveness of job placement, we suggest that a better informed and more aggressive system be used. Job information services consisted generally of maintaining and making available job listings containing data, often several months old, which appeared to be of limited value, particularly to priority servicemen. Job placement services consisted primarily of giving certificates of course completion to vocational training graduates and a letter of introduction to the individual's local employment security office. Representatives from the employment security offices were available to assist the few graduates who planned to remain in the areas around the installations in locating employment while in training. The others had to contact their local employment offices after separation

or find jobs on their own. However, the Air Force Skill Center at Forbes Air Force Base had an extensive job information and placement program. Four employees of the local employment service were assigned full time at that Center. They conducted interviews and contacted employment service representatives in the localities where the interested servicemen intended to reside. Those representatives, in turn, attempted to locate jobs and arrange for interviews after separation. Placement services have been established by the U.S. Employment Service, which provides direct placement and supportive services to veterans through its Veterans Employment Service and is affiliated with 2,400 State employment service offices nationwide.

--To insure program efficiency, we suggest that resource allocation be related to workload and that program performance be continually and substantively evaluated. Funds and operating personnel allocated among the services and within the services to operate the TRANSITION Program were not directly related to the varying numbers of separating servicemen or priority individuals needing training. Rather, it appeared that the amount of funds each installation was spending depended more on the local operating personnel's initiative in competing for funds and on the local command's attitude toward the program. The services did not establish procedures for evaluating whether the program was meeting OSD's objectives and goals. Periodic reports which the services required from the installations did not provide a substantive basis for determining how effective the program was in reaching priority individuals and whether (1) viable counseling was being provided, (2) priority individuals were being provided with employable skills, and (3) trained individuals found employment. Evaluative reviews were conducted separately at various times

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by the audit staff of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), the Department of Labor, and the University of California at Los Angeles. Such reviews are important; however, they are perhaps most useful as a complement to, rather than as a substitute for, continuous and substantive evaluation by program administrators.

We are sending copies of this letter to the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Forrest R. Browne".

Forrest R. Browne
Director