



# REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

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## Accuracy Of Records And Reported Quality Of Military Male Enlistees

Department of Defense

Tests were made of a randomly selected sample of 1,600 male enlistee service records to determine the accuracy of information about (1) police records, (2) educational attainment, and (3) age.

Records concerning education and age were reasonably accurate.

Because of the inaccessibility of local and State police data and incompleteness of FBI files, the military services do not know how many enlistees in the sample had police records. Of the records that were available, 21 enlistees would have been barred had their records been disclosed.

Some of the police record problems may be resolved because:

- The responsibility for national agency checks will be transferred from basic training commands to the entrance stations.
- The Department of Defense is proposing legislation to improve its access to records.

FPCD-76-73

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Report



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

B-157371

The Honorable Sam Nunn  
Chairman, Subcommittee on  
Manpower and Personnel  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to your October 11, 1974, letter regarding improper recruiting practices by the military services, we have had several meetings with your office and have issued an interim report dated January 16, 1976. The interim report points out that the Department of Defense Investigative Service files contained only preliminary police record data, without classification as to importance. We previously agreed with your office that it would be useful to the Subcommittee to show the importance of this data. In addition, we agreed to find out whether the military services knew of these records when the recruits enlisted and, if not, what they did about it when they found out.

We are providing you with the results of the verification tests which were made to determine how widespread and serious improper recruiting practices are and the effect of such practices on the quality of recruits obtained by the services.

Our tests were made of a randomly selected sample of 1,600 male enlistees from the four military services who entered the services during January through June 1974 and were still in the service when the sample was selected. The tests were designed to show the quality of recruits entering the service, and, as agreed, included verifying the services' records concerning (1) police records at time of enlistment, (2) educational attainment, and (3) age at time of enlistment.

POLICE RECORD AT TIME OF ENLISTMENT

The methods used by the services to obtain the police record data on enlistees before enlistment are self-admission and police record checks. These checks are made by the

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recruiters during the enlistment process and involve obtaining information from State and local law enforcement agencies located in areas where the enlistee has resided.

The regulations governing the initiation of local police record checks differ among the services. The Army initiates police record checks only when the recruit admits to prior offenses. The other services initiate police record checks when it is known that access to records is not prohibited by law. According to a Defense-prepared report dated December 1, 1975, police record checks are not available on juveniles in 36 States and the District of Columbia. These 36 States and the District of Columbia provide about 70 percent of the new recruits. The report further points out that an Army study made in 1974 concluded that it was impossible to complete police record checks on about 60 percent of enlistees.

Methods used by the services to encourage self-admission include one-on-one interviews by persons other than the recruiter at both the recruiting stations and the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Stations and the signing of a document by the enlistee acknowledging the consequences if he fails to admit information that may later be disclosed.

The regulations and procedures governing the failure of recruits to disclose police records at the time of enlistment are essentially the same for all the services. The regulations provide that if a subsequently disclosed police record included a felony offense arrest that would have barred enlistment, the enlistee could be discharged for fraudulent enlistment. The regulations also provide that when information indicates the enlistee may have failed to disclose his police arrest record, the unit commander is required to investigate the circumstances and start the required action to discharge or retain the enlistee. Our verification tests showed, however, that those enlistees who did not disclose their arrest records and gained enlistments had a good chance of remaining in the service, although enlistments would have been barred had their arrest records been known.

The Entrance National Agency Checks, which are restricted primarily to information contained in Federal Bureau of Investigation files, are also available before enlistment on some enlistees who are under a delayed enlistment program. The results of the national agency checks,

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in most cases, however, were not available until after enlistment.

Beginning in February 1973, Bureau files were restricted to serious and important police record data and excluded all police record data on juveniles unless the juvenile was tried in court as an adult. Furthermore our tests showed that there were inconsistencies between the various State and local law enforcement agencies in the type of data they reported to the Bureau, and in many instances Bureau records contained no information on the disposition of charges.

An enlistee's police record is not always a bar to enlistment. Even a felony conviction is not always a bar to enlistment. However, those offenses which result in convictions are subject to the services' waiver process. Convictions may be waived depending on the frequency, severity, and other circumstances at the time of application for enlistment, such as evidence of satisfactory rehabilitation. The level of approval authority for waiver requests depends on the type and frequency of convicted offenses.

The restrictions encountered by the services in obtaining access to many law enforcement agencies' records at the State and local level and excluding certain data from Bureau records make it unlikely that complete criminal record data can be obtained on a good portion of the services' recruits. There is probably no feasible way of obtaining complete data on offenses committed by juveniles no matter how serious or important, nor is there any assurance of obtaining complete data on less serious offenses committed by adults to establish a pattern of misbehavior. Defense officials said they believed that there were enlistees in the services with undisclosed police records just as serious as enlistees whose files contained derogatory information.

#### Results of verification tests

Our random sample of 1,600 members was matched against the Defense Central Index of Investigations to determine those enlistees having possible derogatory information in their Defense investigative files. This sample probably includes additional enlistees who have not disclosed their police records. The index showed that the Defense investigative file on 1,275 enlistees contained no derogatory information, the file on 279 enlistees contained possible derogatory information, and the file on 46 enlistees could

not be identified. This data, expressed in percentages, by service, is shown in appendix I.

With the assistance of the services, we reviewed the records of the 279 enlistees with possible derogatory information to obtain data for (1) making a classification of enlistees by the most serious type of arrests contained in the Defense investigative files, (2) determining the actions taken by the service during the enlistment process, (3) determining what effect the undisclosed arrest record would have had on enlistment had it been known by the service at that time, and (4) determining the actions taken by the service upon disclosure of the police arrest record. The services told us that complete records were not available in all cases and that some of the information provided was based on assumptions.

The 279 enlistees classified by the most serious offense contained in the Defense investigative files is shown in appendix II. It is noted that this classification is based on arrests that were disclosed both before and after enlistment and includes 230 convictions.

In analyzing the 279 enlistees whose Defense investigative files contained derogatory information, we noted that 101, or 36 percent, did not disclose all or part of their police record, contained in national agency files, before enlistment. In addition, the services provided information showing that police records not known at the time of enlistment, but disclosed after enlistment, would have barred 21, or 1.4 percent, of the 1,554 enlistees whose Defense investigative files were reviewed. Only one enlistee was discharged for not disclosing his arrest record.

According to a Defense-prepared report dated December 1, 1975, on a study made of the enlistment processing, the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) and the Department of Justice Order 601-75, which was implemented in January 1976 by States and local municipalities, will place further restrictions on the services in obtaining complete police record data. Under Order 601-75, the services are authorized access only to adult felony convictions. The report stated that in an effort to help alleviate the problem, action had been taken to obtain the national agencies' data faster.

According to service officials the responsibility for initiating the national agency checks will be transferred

from basic training commands to the entrance stations in October 1976. It is believed that initiating the national agency checks at the entrance stations will be more effective in getting information from enlistees before enlistment. The report further stated that Defense had drafted proposed legislation which it believed would help alleviate the problem in obtaining access to State and local police records.

Appendixes II, III, and IV summarize the data provided by the services, which is based on arrest record data contained in the Defense's investigative files, personnel and other records to the extent available, and eligibility criteria at the time of enlistment.

#### VERIFICATION OF EDUCATION

There were no minimum educational requirements during the enlistment period of our review for entering any of the services. Although the educational attainment of an enlistee does have a bearing on whether other eligibility requirements are met (i.e., an enlistee who is a non-high-school graduate would need higher mental and aptitude scores than if he were a high school graduate), our review was not to determine whether the enlistee met these other eligibility requirements at time of enlistment. Our work was to determine the accuracy of the level of education being reported by the services.

To verify the enlistees' education attainment level, we (1) obtained the enlistees' educational level from the services' records and (2) mailed questionnaires to the schools named in the services' records.

Of the 1,600 enlistees in our sample, questionnaires for 1,479 were sent to schools. Questionnaires were not sent on 99 Army and 22 Marine Corps enlistees because we were unable to obtain the names and addresses of the schools attended. According to officials, the enlistees were in transit or on extended temporary duty or their records did not contain adequate information for identifying the school. Of the 1,479 enlistees on whom questionnaires were sent, schools did not provide data on 93 because of privacy laws or simply did not respond.

Twenty-five of the 1,386 enlistees never attended the named school or there was no record of attendance according to the schools that responded.

For the 1,386 enlistees on whom schools responded, we did not summarize discrepancies within the non-high-school graduate group. (See app. V.) The discrepancies within the non-high-school graduate group were many, but because the services' principal quality indicator is based on whether the enlistee is a high school graduate or a non-high-school graduate we excluded these discrepancies from our summary analysis. In most instances these discrepancies were off by 1 year as a result of the enlistee's claiming his last grade attended as the grade completed.

A summary of discrepancies (see app. VI) of the educational attainment level for the 1,386 enlistees, on whom schools responded, shows the Navy's records and reporting to be the most inaccurate. The summary shows a difference of as much as 8.1 percent.

A summary of the results of our verification, using the services' principal quality indicator, that is, whether or not the enlistee is a high school graduate, is shown in appendix VII. As indicated, all the services reported more enlistees to be high school graduates or equivalent and above than were shown by our verification.

It is noted that our questionnaires to schools were based on data contained in the services' records, which may not have provided sufficient information for identifying all schools actually attended by a recruit. Also, it is possible that some recruits were not identified by schools due to insufficient search, misplaced files, misspelled names or name changes.

We believe the reporting by the services of the educational level of attainment of recruits contained in our sample to be reasonably accurate, with due consideration given the above possibilities mentioned.

The details of our verification of the educational level of attainment is shown in appendixes V, VI, and VII.

#### VERIFICATION OF AGE

The minimum age requirement for entering the military service is 17 years. Applicants who have not reached 18

years of age at the time of enlistment, however, must have the consent of their parents or legal guardian. Our verification work was to determine the accuracy of the services' records concerning an enlistee's age.

We limited the analysis to the discrepancies found and the effect those discrepancies had on the enlistee's eligibility at the time of enlistment. The verification work included (1) reviewing and obtaining from the services' records the enlistee's date and place of birth and (2) requesting written confirmation from various State bureaus of vital statistics.

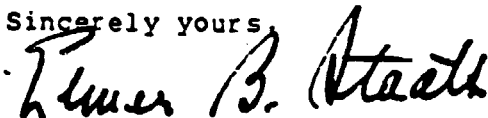
We did not request verification of age on 388 of our sample of 1,600 enlistees. Of the 388 sampled 318 were Air Force enlistees on whom we accepted as evidence of age their registration with selective service boards. According to Selective Service officials all their registrants are at least 18 years of age. We did not verify the age of the other 70 enlistees due primarily to the difficulty in obtaining data.

Of the 1,212 enlistees on whom responses were received from States, 1,145, or 95 percent, were verified to be in agreement with the services' records; 17 enlistees, or 1 percent, were verified not to be in agreement with the services' records; and on 50 enlistees, or 4 percent, the States responded that there was no record or that more information was needed to identify the enlistee. We did not attempt to determine reasons for the States' inability to identify the 50 enlistees. Detailed results of our verification of age are shown in appendix VIII.

The results of our verification of age does not indicate a serious problem. Only one of the enlistees was verified to be underage at the time of enlistment.

Officials of the Department of Defense and the services have informally commented on the contents of this report.

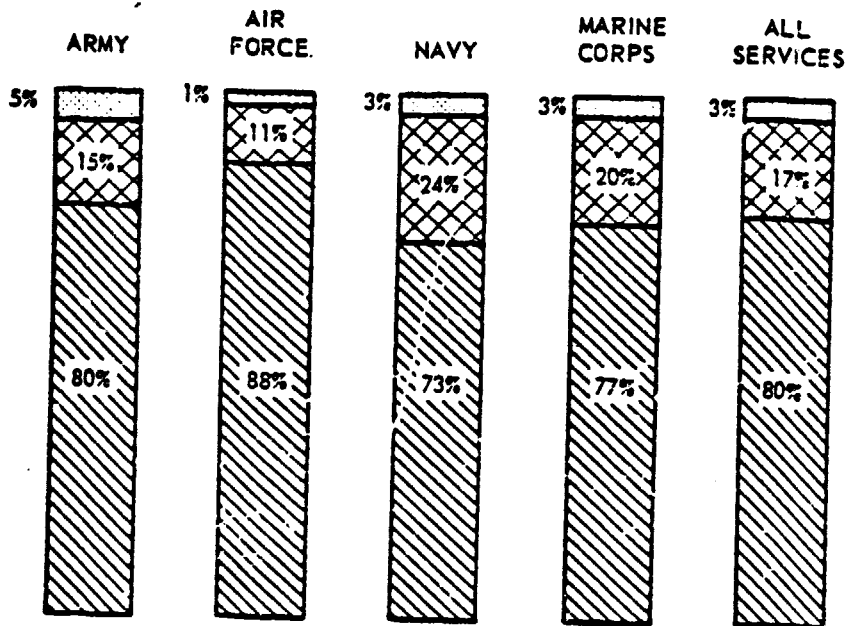
Sincerely yours,






Comptroller General  
of the United States



RESULTS OF THE MATCH OF OUR SAMPLE OF 1,600 ENLISTEES  
(400 EACH SERVICE) WITH THE DEFENSE CENTRAL INDEX OF  
INVESTIGATIONS TO DETERMINE THOSE ENLISTEES HAVING  
DEROGATORY INFORMATION IN THEIR DEFENSE INVESTIGATIVE FILE



-  - Investigative file contained no derogatory information.
-  - Investigative file contained possible derogatory information.
-  - Investigative file could not be identified.

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CLASSIFICATION OF THE 279 ENLISTEES WHOSE

DEFENSE INVESTIGATIVE FILE CONTAINED DEROGATORY

INFORMATION BY THE MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE

	Army		Air Force		Navy		Marine Corps		Total	
	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent
Traffic violation	23	38	18	42	38	40	19	23	98	35
Drug or alcohol	13	22	9	21	22	23	7	9	51	18
Misdemeanor:										
Property crime	18	30	10	23	12	13	16	20	56	20
Crime against person	4	6	5	12	1	1	13	16	23	8
Felony:										
Property crime	1	2	1	2	15	16	21	26	38	14
Crime against person	1	2	0	0	4	4	5	6	10	4
Not known	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<u>60</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>279</u>	<u>100</u>

Note: 1. The above classification was provided by the services and is based on arrests that were disclosed both before and after enlistment and includes 230 convictions.

2. It is noted that the Marine Corps and Navy have higher rates of felony arrests than the Army and Air Force. The wide variances may be due, in part, to the separate classifications made by the services.

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SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT THAT WITHHELD ARREST RECORDS  
WOULD HAVE HAD ON ENLISTMENT HAD THEY BEEN KNOWN AT  
THAT TIME, AND THE ACTION THAT WAS TAKEN AFTER  
DISCLOSURE BY CHECK OF BUREAU FILES

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total enlistees whose De- fense investigative file contained possible derog- atory information	60	43	95	81	279
Less: Enlistees who had no Bureau record or whose Bureau record was disclos- ed before enlistment	<u>35</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>178</u>
Enlistees whose Bureau rec- ord was not disclosed be- fore enlistment (withheld arrest record)	<u>25</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>101</u>
Knowledge of the Bureau rec- ord would have barred en- listees' enlistment	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>21</u>
Personnel and other records showed:					
Discharged for withhold- ing arrest record	1	0	0	0	1
Waiver action taken	0	0	2	0	2
No action taken	0	3	3	5	11
Undeterminable, records not available	0	0	0	7	7
Knowledge of the Bureau rec- ord would not have barred enlistees' enlistment	<u>24</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>80</u>
Personnel and other records showed:					
Discharged for withhold- ing arrest record	0	0	0	0	0
Waiver action taken	6	0	0	0	6
No action taken	18	10	19	24	71
Undeterminable, records not available	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	<u>25</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>101</u>

APPENDIX IV

SUMMARY OF WAIVER ACTION TAKEN ON ENLISTEES  
POLICE ARREST RECORD KNOWN BEFORE ENLISTMENT  
AND THE WAIVER ACTION THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN  
REQUIRED HAD THE BUREAU ARREST RECORD BEEN KNOWN

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total enlistees whose Defense investigative file contained possible derogatory information	60	43	95	81	279
Less: Enlistees with no convictions (waiver not required)	<u>25</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>a/3</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>a/49</u>
Enlistees with convictions	<u>35</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>230</u>
Enlistees with convictions known prior to enlistment	<u>10</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>144</u>
Waiver required	10	7	38	39	94
Obtained	10	7	25	34	76
Not obtained	0	0	13	b/ 5	b/18
Waiver not required	0	18	32	0	50
Enlistees with convictions disclosed by check of Bureau files after enlistment	<u>25</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>86</u>
Enlistment would have been barred	1	3	5	7	16
Waiver would have been required	6	5	11	24	46
Waiver would not have been required	<u>18</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>24</u>
Total	<u>35</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>230</u>

a/Includes one enlistee on whom records were not available.

b/Includes five enlistees whose enlistment should have been barred.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF OUR VERIFICATION TEST OF THE  
REPORTED EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ENLISTED MILITARY  
PERSONNEL WHO ENTERED THE SERVICE JANUARY THROUGH JUNE 1974

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Total</u>
Enlistees randomly selected for verification	400	400	400	400	1,600
Less: Enlistees on whom no response was obtained	<u>121</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>214</u>
Total enlistees on whom schools responded	<u>279</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>382</u>	<u>325</u>	<u>1,386</u>
<u>Results of verification</u>					
High school graduates as coded into the services' information system:					
Confirmed by schools	147	278	156	136	717
Verified to have some college credits	0	3	21	0	24
Verified to have high school equivalency certificate	0	13	14	0	27
Verified to be non-high school graduates	3	4	20	8	35
School reported--never attended or no record	5	4	0	3	12
Holders of high school equivalency certificate as coded into the services' information system:					
Confirmed by schools	4	28	0	12	44
Verified to be non-high-school graduates (note a)	4	9	0	0	13
School reported--never attended or no record	0	1	0	2	3
College credits as coded into the services' information system:					
Confirmed by schools	10	27	27	5	69
Verified to be high school graduates only	4	3	4	0	11
Verified to be holder of high school equivalency certificate only	1	0	0	0	1
Non-high-school graduates as coded into the services' information system:					
Confirmed by schools	101	27	129	146	403
Verified to be holders of high school equivalency certificate	0	1	2	0	3
Verified to be high school graduates	0	2	9	3	14
School reported--never attended or no record	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
Total	<u>279</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>382</u>	<u>325</u>	<u>1,386</u>

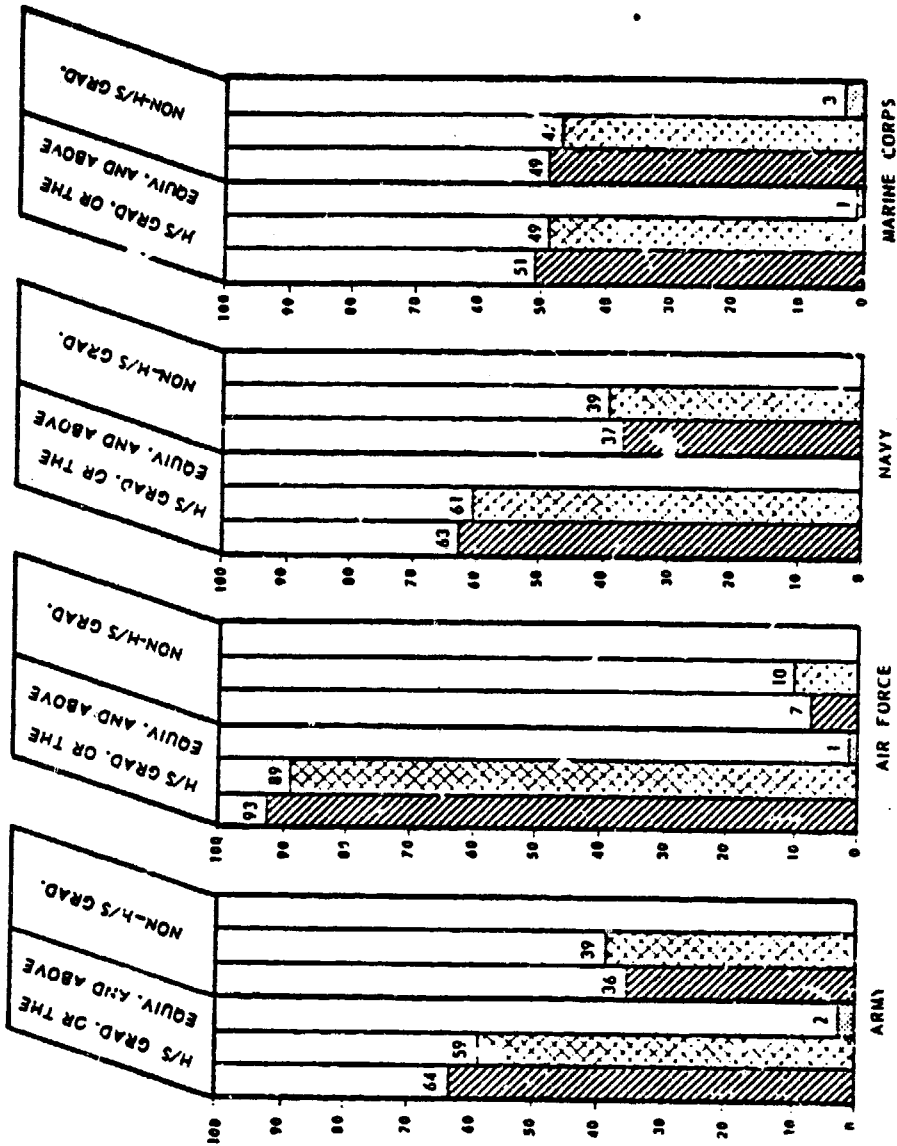
a/According to the Air Force, the services did not require State certification of GED status at the time these enlistments were effected, and the responding schools would not necessarily have had knowledge of the recruits status.

SUMMARY OF DISCREPANCIES FOUND  
IN OUR VERIFICATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL  
ATTAINMENT REPORTED BY THE SERVICES,  
USING THE SERVICES PRINCIPAL QUALITY  
INDICATOR OF WHETHER OR NOT THE  
ENLISTEE IS A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Total</u>
Enlistees on whom school provided positive data	274	395	382	310	1,361
Reported to be high school graduates or equivalent and above, but were verified to be non-high-school graduates:					
Number	7	13	20	8	48
Percent	2.6	3.3	5.2	2.6	3.5
Reported to be non-high school graduates but were verified to be high school graduates or equivalent and above:					
Number	-	3	11	3	17
Percent	-	.8	2.9	1.0	1.2
Total:					
Number	7	16	31	11	65
Percent	2.6	4.1	8.1	3.6	4.7

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COMPARISON OF THE EDUCATION QUALITY (EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES) AS REPORTED BY THE SERVICES WITH THE RESULTS OF GAO'S VERIFICATION OF ENLISTED MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO ENTERED THE SERVICE JANUARY THROUGH JUNE 1974



AS REPORTED BY THE SERVICE    
  AS VERIFIED BY GAO WITH SCHOOLS    
  SCHOOL REPORTED - NEVER ATTENDED OR NO RECORD

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RESULTS OF OUR VERIFICATION TEST  
OF THE AGE OF ENLISTED MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO ENTERED  
THE SERVICE JANUARY THROUGH JUNE 1974

	Army		Air Force		Navy		Marine Corps		Total
	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	
Enlistees randomly selected for verification	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100	1,600
Less: Enlistees on whom no verification was obtained due to: Inaccessibility of military records Acceptance of evidence of registration with Selective Service Boards and the enlistee's being at least 18 years of age Birth place in foreign country Inadvertently omitted from request	8 0 18 3	   —	0 310 0 0	   —	0 0 14 1	   —	23 0 3 0	0 0 3 0	31 318 35 4
Total	29	7	318	79	38	9	3	1	388
Total enlistees on whom responses were received from States' bureau of vital statistics	371	93	62	21	362	21	397	99	1,222
Results of responses from States: Services' records verified to be correct (note a) Service records verified to be incorrect No record or more information needed to identify	352 2 17	95 1 4	81 0 1	9 <sup>a</sup> 0 1	342 9 11	94 3 3	370 6 21	93 2 5	1,145 17 50
Total	371	100	82	100	362	100	397	100	1,212

a Of those 17 enlistees on whom the services' records were verified to be incorrect, 13 were only slightly different (a month or 1 or 2 days off) and had no effect on the enlistees' eligibility or requirement of parental consent at the time of enlistment. Of the remaining four enlistees one Navy and two Marines would have required parental consent; and one Navy enlistee would have been ineligible at the time of enlistment because he was under age.

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